Council 4 AFSCME Testimony Labor Committee 2/27/12

My name is Brian Anderson. I am a legislative and political representative for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 35,000 Connecticut public and private employee members.

Council 4 supports:

H.B. No. 5291 (RAISED) AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE, REMOVING THE MINIMUM WAGE TIP CREDIT, AND INCREASING PENALTIES FOR FAILURE TO PAY THE MINIMUM WAGE.

The goal of the minimum wage was to lift people out of poverty and make work pay. Surely, given the cost of living in Connecticut $9 per hour is not too high, nor $9.75 for the next year. Historically, our economy has been the envy of the world because it has been a strong consumption based economy. When a large number of citizens earn enough money to buy the things that make up the American Dream, we all prosper through increased job creation and economic churn. With the latest federal census showing that 50% of all Americans are somewhere between working poor and out right indigent, this wage hike is badly needed.

H.B. No. 5199 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING DISCRIMINATORY HIRING PRACTICES AND UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS.

It is patently unfair to bar people from applying for work because they have been unemployed for a considerable period of time. It is unconscionable in the time of high unemployment that we are now experiencing. It is a practice that also smacks of age discrimination. Many of our unemployed are manufacturing workers who are victims of bad federal trade and tax policy. This bill is badly needed.

S.B. No. 181 (RAISED) AN ACT REQUIRING THE STANDARD AND PREVAILING WAGE BE PAID TO CERTAIN EMPLOYEES OF EMPLOYERS WHO RECEIVED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM STATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ENTITIES.

The practice of setting a prevailing wage for government financed work makes good sense, particularly in a recession. The government should not be in the business of encouraging the massive disparity in income that is now threatening our economy. It should be in the business of encouraging private industry to pay a fair wage that allows our country men and women the opportunity to access the American Dream.

Council 4 also urges you to oppose:

S.B. No. 152 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING ONE DAY EQUALS ONE ABSENCE.

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The current law works well. With such limited unionization, employers have as strong a hand as they have had in dealing with employees. There is no reason to give employers increased power to terminate.

S.B. No. 153 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A RETIRED STATE EMPLOYEE WORKFORCE RESERVE.

This bill would discourage hiring, particularly of young people who suffer some of the biggest employment challenges. It encourages the hiring of people who already have a retirement income, in the time of high overall unemployment and recession. This bill is wrong for the times.

S.B. No. 155 (RAISED) AN ACT ALLOWING EMPLOYERS TO PAY WAGES USING PAYROLL CARDS.

This bill would favor bankers over employees. Especially for low paying jobs, it's likely to lead to exploitive fees, lost and unrecoverable money and transfer of liability to the employee.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.