



CONNECTICUT BUSINESS & INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

Testimony of Kia F. Murrell
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Before the Committee on Labor and Public Employees
Hartford, CT
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S.B. 149 AAC Denial of Unemployment Benefits to Certain Drivers Who are Unemployed as a Result of a Drug or Alcohol Test

Good Afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski and other members of the Committee. My name is Kia Murrell and I am Associate Counsel at the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA). CBIA representing more than 10,000 companies throughout the state of Connecticut, but most of our members are small businesses of 50 or fewer employees.

We support S.B. 149 as a measure designed to enhance unemployment benefit eligibility standards. Connecticut's unemployment compensation system was designed to benefit only those who are unemployed due to no fault of their own. In view of today's very difficult economy and the pressure it has put on the state's Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund, we cannot afford to award unemployment benefits to individuals who cannot perform the essential functions of their jobs.

Being terminated or suspended due to a failed drug or alcohol test clearly impacts an individual's ability to perform the essential functions of their job. In the case of drivers, the attainment of a special operator's permit is an essential job requirement. If the individual is not qualified to receive the permit due to their own fault, then he or she is simply not qualified for the job and should not be allowed to receive unemployment benefits upon termination.

Especially today, public policy in Connecticut needs to uphold to the spirit and purpose of the unemployment compensation system. The legislature must make sure that only those individuals who lose their jobs due to no fault of their own are allowed to collect unemployment benefits. Doing so is imperative to maintaining confidence in the integrity and fiscal stability of our system.

For these reasons, we urge the Committee to support S.B. 149.