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Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. My name is William Boucher and I am the President of the Connecticut Police & Fire Union. The Union represents state firefighters, regulatory personnel, and law enforcement officers, including Police Officers employees at the University of Connecticut and the State Universities. I am here today to speak on behalf of HB-5277, An Act Concerning the Indemnification of University Police. The police officers who work at UConn and the State Universities are not covered by the indemnifications statutes the cover other police officers and state troopers. You will hear today from some of the police officers who work at these institutions who will be able to explain to you the duties and responsibilities of their jobs and why it is important for them to be included in an indemnification statute; I would like to take a few minutes to explain why I believe it is important.

Facts:

Sec. 10a-142 of the CGS allows the established police forces at the University of Connecticut (including its branches and the Health Center) and the four State Universities (Southern, Western, Eastern, and Central) to “have the same duties, responsibilities and authority under sections 7-281, 14-8, 54-1f and 54-33a and title 53a as members of a duly organized local police department.”

Sec. 7-294a of the CGS states that a “law enforcement unit” is “any agency, organization or department of this state ... whose primary function includes the enforcement of criminal laws ... the protection of life and property, or the prevention, detection or investigation of crime.” It further states that a “police officer” is “any member of a law enforcement unit who performs police duties.”

The DAS job description for Police Officer states in Purpose of Class: “In a state agency, college, university or airport facility this class is accountable for the protection, safety and security of individuals and property with full police powers and responsibility for law enforcement.” The job description includes the following as examples of duties: may arrest individuals on scene and issue summons; serve warrants or appear in court as arresting officer or witness for violation of statutes or regulations; conducts special investigations and/or investigations of criminal and other activities; at time of heightened alert level under Homeland Security procedures may be required to maintain building security and perform patrol duties; provides traffic and/or crowd control; transports prisoners and inmates; may assist State Police in investigation of major criminal acts.

Sec. 29-8a (a) of the CGS states: "The state shall protect and save harmless any state policeman from financial loss or expense, including legal fees and costs . . . provided such state policeman, at the time of the acts resulting in such alleged deprivation, was acting in the discharge of his duties or within the scope of his employment under the direction of a superior officer."

Sec. 29-8a (c) of the CGS further states: "As used in this section, state policeman includes a member of the Office of State Capitol Police or any person appointed under section 29-18 as a special policeman for state buildings and grounds . . ."

Training:

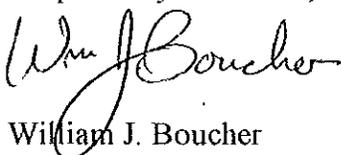
University police officers are currently required to complete the same training requirements as all other law enforcement officers in Connecticut which are mandated by the Police Officer Training and Standards (P.O.S.T.). They attend the Police Academy in Meriden and are required to complete 22 weeks of academy time. New police officers are then subject to 14 weeks or 560 hours of Field Training conducted by certified Field Training Officers before they can assume the full duties of their jobs. In order to maintain their certification, they are required to complete the mandatory 60 hours of P.O.S.T. in-service training cycle every three years.

Conclusion:

Due to the fact that the police officers who are employed at the state universities derive their police powers from CGS 10a-142 and not 29-18, as most of the other police officers who are employed by the State of Connecticut are, the police officers at these institutions are not provided with the same indemnity protections as all other police officers. Currently police officers who work for Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Department of Revenue Services, State Capitol and Legislative Office Building, Division of Special Revenue, Department of Children and Families, Department of Public Safety, and the Community Colleges are all covered by the indemnification clause of CGS 29-8a. We are asking you to provide the police officers who work at the University of Connecticut, the UConn Health Center, and the State Universities the same protection as all of the other police officers who work for the state. This change in status does not require any change in training, equipment, or benefits (including retirement) that the university police officers currently receive. It is a zero-cost item to the State, with potentially significant benefits in the area of liability.

Based on all of this information, I think you can see why I feel that it is so important that HB-5277 be passed. Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully submitted,



William J. Boucher