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**TESTIMONY – LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 26, 2013**

Good afternoon Senator Olston, Representative Tercyak and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee.

My name is Glenn Terlecki and I am the President of the Connecticut Police and Fire Union. Our Union represents approximately 900 dedicated State employees in law enforcement and firefighting professions. I am here today to testify in SUPPORT of:

Raised Bill No. 905

“AN ACT CONCERNING PORTAL-TO-PORTAL WORKERS’ COMPENSATION COVERAGE FOR MUNICIPAL AND STATE POLICE AND FIRE DISPATCHERS.”

This bill would extend workers’ compensation coverage to public safety dispatchers under certain circumstances. These individuals are often required to report to work under extreme weather conditions when nonessential employees are excused from work. These employee are also at times required to work multiple mandatory shifts for consecutive days. These public servants deserve the same protection as police officers and fire fighters.

Although the language in this raised bill already does cover police officers and firefighters, I would like to raise the issue that in the existing definitions in CGS 31-175, the definition of police officer only covers a member of the Division of State Police within the Department of Public Safety or a member of a local organized municipal police department. Also, the definition of a firefighter only covers a member of a voluntary or paid municipal department.

This definition inadvertently but specifically excludes police officers employed by State agencies other than the Department of Public Safety and all firefighters in State service. Excluded police and firefighters and their departments include; the University of Connecticut Police and Fire Department, Police departments in Eastern, Western, Central and Southern Connecticut State Universities, State Environmental Protection Police, UCONN Health Center Police and Fire Departments, all Community College Police Departments, Department of Revenue Service Police, certified police officers as inspectors with the Department of Motor Vehicles, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Police and Fire Departments, police officers with the Department of Children and Family, Bradley Airport Police and Fire Departments, Southbury Training School Fire Department, Central Connecticut State University Fire Department, Connecticut’s fire and police academies as well as the police officers employed here at the



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State Capitol. There are approximately over 700 police and fire professionals employed by the State that slip through the cracks and are not protected by this statute.

Along with adding public safety dispatchers to be included in workers compensation coverage, I feel it would be appropriate to amend the definition of police officer and firefighter for the purposes of this statute.

In the Connecticut Police and Fire Union's collective bargaining agreement with the State of Connecticut, there is language that specifically includes these members for portal-to-portal workers compensation. Even with clear and unambiguous contract language, claims have been challenged in the past based on the exclusion of these members in the State statute definition. This impedes the process resulting in delayed approval of claims and an unnecessary financial strain placed on police and firefighters while claims wait for formal hearings to resolve this confusion.

The exclusion in the definitions in CGS 31-375 is a severe oversight that has been long overdue in being addressed. I am here today asking for your support in the current amendments and also for your review and consideration in making changes to the appropriate definitions affecting these dedicated firefighter and police officers.

Glenn Tarlecki, President
Connecticut Police and Fire Union