Council 4 AFSCME Testimony Labor Committee 2/19/13

My name is Brian Anderson. I am a legislative and political representative for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 32,000 Connecticut public and private employee members.

Council 4 supports:

SB S.B. No. 823 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SEVERE MENTAL OR EMOTIONAL IMPAIRMENT AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE

This bill extends workers' compensation to that very small number of employees who experienced a horrible catastrophe on the job. Sadly, Connecticut has learned a lot about this in the last two months. Our Newtown school employees never expected December 14 to change their lives forever. They never expected to have a close brush with death or experience a mass murder in their elementary school.

This bill requires that a licensed medical professional would have to certify that someone was experiencing work related post traumatic stress disorder syndrome before they would be eligible to access such workers compensation coverage. It would also have to be certified that they "witnessed" people dying or being maimed as the result of another person's intentional action. The language specifically forbids accidents or natural acts. Council 4 believes that the language should be changed to also cover acts of nature or accidents that make the same test otherwise. Could not a L'Ambiance Plaza catastrophe not cause PTSD for construction workers witnessing co-workers killed? It is just as traumatic to experience death or maiming through an accidental fire, explosion or act of nature.

Council 4 also urges that language be included to allow for workers who hear acts that maim or kill to be covered. We represent municipal and state police and fire dispatchers. Part of their job is to form a quick bond with people facing hazardous situations and talk them to safety. At times they are on the phone for a long duration of time with victims in the middle of a horrendous situation. No matter how you look at this bill, PTSD coverage would only apply to a small number of diagnosed employees. This is a humane and wise piece of legislation.

Council 4 also supports:

S.B. No. 159 AN ACT CONCERNING EMPLOYEE PRIVACY

No employee or prospective employee should have to provide passwords or PIN numbers or other such electronic data to future employers.

S.B. No. 349 AN ACT CONCERNING TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES AND WRITTEN JOB ORDERS.

This bill protects job seekers from fraudulent actions by employment agencies. Hopefully, legitimate job placement agencies will support this.

S.B. No. 864 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING AN INCREASE IN PENALTIES DUE TO FALSE OR MISLEADING DECLARATIONS, STATEMENTS OR REPRESENTATIONS.

Penalties have not kept pace with the seriousness of these offenses and should rise.

Council 4 opposes:

Proposed H.B. No. 5090 AN ACT CONCERNING THE LEGISLATURE'S IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT IN THE STATE.

It is hard to imagine how nonpartisan legislative staff would write this. Often there are two opposing sides to these issues. They are very subjective. If passed we ask that the quality of the job, whether is pays a middle class wage or forces workers to seek welfare assistance from taxpayers, be included in such a report.

H.B. No. 6450 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE FILING FEE AT THE STATE BOARD OF MEDIATION AND ARBITRATION.

We oppose raising this fee. There should be no fee. As with other legitimate government services, this should be covered by our taxes. In the private sector, arbitration for unions has largely been done away with by corporate management excessively hiking costs, and making it beyond labor's ability to pay.

H.B. No. 6371 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE DISCLOSURE OF PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE STATE BOARD OF LABOR RELATIONS AND THE STATE BOARD OF MEDIATION AND ARBITRATION.

It is hard to imagine how such an evaluation of performance would be done. Council 4 is aware of no problems with or caused by the current vetting system.