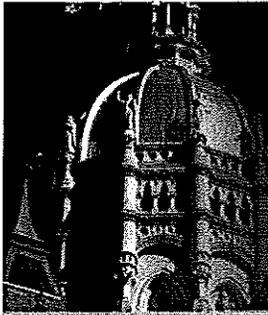


*Written only #2*



# CCM 2013 Testimony

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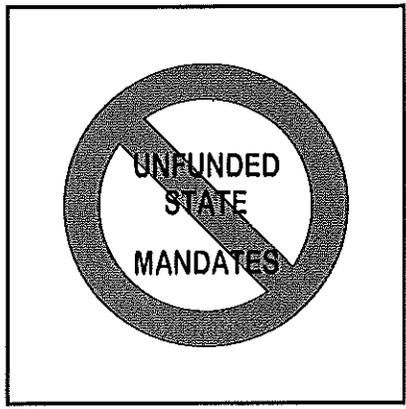
## **LABOR & PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE** February 26, 2013

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 92% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to towns and cities.

### **Senate Bill 925 "An Act Concerning Workers' Compensation Coverage for Firefighters and Police Officers"**

Police officers and firefighters are valued public servants. Their dedication and service to our communities is not at issue. What is at question is whether the State should change the foundation of the workers' compensation system and require local budgets cover the costs of a new, mandated-presumption.

SB 925 would mandate workers' compensation benefits for all firefighters and police officers experiencing a cardiac emergency for up to 72 hours after they were on duty or in training. Thus, it would **mandate a special presumption under workers' compensation law that such specific employees' heart emergencies are to be considered work-related -- regardless of whether on duty or not** (most firefighter schedules are typically three days on, three days off). By doing so, SB 925 would ignore commonly accepted risk factors of heart emergencies such as smoking, abnormal cholesterol, diabetes, high blood pressure, abdominal obesity, age, diet, and overall medical history – and instead, place the burden on hometown officials to prove otherwise.



**CCM opposes SB 925** as a new, unfunded state mandate that could have negative policy and fiscal implications on local resources. Simply put – this proposed mandate would fundamentally overturn the workers' compensation system by disregarding the system's core principle of requiring proof of a causal link between an injury and the job. By doing so, it is reasonable to expect that this mandate would increase the number of claims filed – based on the fact that filing a claim would increase the probability of an award—because the burden of proof has shifted to towns and cities to refute the claim. The fiscal ramifications of this likelihood would negatively impact municipal budgets statewide.

The professions police officers and firefighters have chosen involves personal risk and courage. To this end, local officials have long supported public safety employees and their just compensation when injuries occur on duty and as a result of their work. **However, special state-mandated presumptions for heart attacks that occur up to three days after someone was on duty are simply unreasonable.**

As state lawmakers grapple with major budget issues – proposals such as SB 925 that seek to mandate special benefits should ultimately be considered in the context of two fundamental questions:

1. *Is there a statewide public policy problem that demands action by the General Assembly — or are the needs of special interest groups at issue?*
2. *Can local residential and business property taxpayers afford the costs of this new state mandate in this economy?*

The answer to both questions is a resounding “NO”.

Local officials oppose state-mandated special benefits that presume off-duty illnesses are directly related to job activities. The existing workers’ compensation system is fair and the appropriate mechanism to address work-related claims – there is no compelling reason to jerry-rig the system for select employees. Again, if there is a link between the illness and the job, then the current workers’ compensation system provides coverage.

Separating the emotional element from the policy and fiscal impacts in this debate is difficult, yet essential. Forcing towns to assume the costs of this benefit for certain employees may be politically attractive, but it would not be responsible public policy.

CCM urges you to **oppose SB 925, now – in committee**. Your hometown needs action on budget solutions – not new unfunded state mandates.

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If you have any questions, please contact Robert Labanara, State Relations Manager of CCM  
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