



AFSCME Local 269
Testimony before the Appropriations Committee of the
Connecticut General Assembly
February 11, 2014

Re: H.B. No. 5030 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2015

Good evening Chairwoman Bye, Chairwoman Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Sandra Barrachina, and I am a member of AFSCME Local 269, representing employees at the State Department of Labor. I'm here tonight in support of the additional staffing for wage enforcement included in the Governor's Midterm Budget Adjustment for the Department of Labor.

I work as a "Field Supervisor" in the Wage and Workplace Standards Division of the DOL, ensuring that Connecticut's workers get what they earn and that Connecticut's businesses play by the rules. My department is responsible for enforcing over 160 Connecticut statutes and federal regulations for approximately 94,000 businesses and 1.9 million workers. We ensure workers are paid properly for the hours they work, protect employment of minors, and handle employee misclassification. We annually recover over \$6 million in back wages that is returned to the workers and enters the CT economy. We also make certain that workers are recorded on payroll documents for tax purposes. Most of all, we ensure a level playing field for all businesses. Businesses that employ unreported workers affords them a huge savings and creates a serious competitive disadvantage for all the law abiding employers in this state.

I have worked at the DOL for over 36 years. In that time the number of businesses and workers that our division covers has increased significantly, however our staffing levels have not kept pace. In addition, the number of laws and amendments constantly change. Frankly, this puts a strain on our ability to get the job done timely. The investigators are working with an exorbitant case load and a tremendous back log. This is unfair to the workers who have to wait over a year for us to even be able to conduct the investigation and collect their back wages. Many of our complainants frequently call with distressing stories how they need this money for their daily living expenses. Delays in conducting an investigation can also result in unsuccessful resolutions, as the business has closed or filed Bankruptcy.

It is estimated that currently each investigator recovers \$250,000 in back wages each year. The additional six staff for the DOL's Division of Wage and Workplace Standards will bring in millions of dollars each year to the Connecticut economy; earned by restaurant workers, construction crews, retail sales, and others. The additional staff will ensure that this money is back where it belongs: in the wallets of middle class workers, circulating to the benefit of our communities.