

Kristen Rich
Stamford Probate Court
February 18, 2014

Good afternoon, members of the Labor Committee. My name is Kristen Rich. I am an Assistant Clerk in the Stamford Probate Court. I am here in support of HB 5066, An Act Concerning Certain Workers' Rights to Collectively Bargain, and to urge you to pass it quickly.

I've worked for probate for a total 7 years and felt very secure in my job up until now.

This new lack of security comes primarily because in a few short months, my judge will retire as is required by probate law as he is not to work past a certain age and I, in return, do not know if I will have a job after that. I realize that when a replacement judge comes in, he has the power to dismiss any and all of us clerks who remain. If this happens to me, I know it will be extremely difficult to find employment. The passage of this legislation will provide my coworkers and I peace of mind.

I want to add some of my own input regarding pay and I know this is a major concern to most probate court employees across the state of Connecticut. In seven years at probate, my salary went up by a mere \$1,000.00. And then the threat of a union was heard by Probate Administration. In response, a COLA was implemented which gave me a gain of a few hundred dollars annually which amounts a few nickels per hours worked. In addition to that, everyone was given a merit raise. The merit raise is so small for me that I believe it would be less insulting if I wasn't given a raise at all. The formation of a Union is still in the works because the so called fixes are not acceptable by us and pale in comparison to industry standards.

Lastly, my contribution to healthcare insurance is crippling as I lose of total of one third of my salary before taxes. This is an issue that is also in dire need of adjusting.

In closing, my colleagues and I believe that the only way to rectify the issues that negatively affect us is to push for the formation of a union. Probate Administration has not responded to our concerns in a way that comes close to industry standards. Their feeble attempts to placate us with insulting solutions have failed miserably. Now it is our turn to take over and make it right. I opt for a union.

My bid today is to strongly encourage the passage of this legislation. It is well merited and very much overdue.