

Good afternoon members of the Labor Committee. My name is Blair Bertaccini; I am a resident of Waterbury CT and president of AFSCME Local 269 which represents workers at the CTDOL. We have members that live and work in Waterbury and use Waterbury Hospital.

I will speak about Waterbury Hospital, because although bill 5257 applies to any non-profit hospital in CT, the Tenet take-over of Waterbury Hospital is the deal that is on the table.

The City of Waterbury currently has an 11.5 % unemployment rate and the Waterbury Labor Market area has 9.2% unemployment rate. The last thing our city needs is the destruction of good paying jobs.

The Tenet Corporation currently wishes to take over our non-profit hospital and convert into profit making enterprise. The only thing I ever trust a capitalist entity to do is to attempt to make money, their bottom line is the bottom line. In recent years we have seen many profitable corporations drive down the pay, benefits and working conditions of their employees whether we are talking about Caterpillar or Boeing or others. Employees are made to accept the abolition of pensions, two tier wage structures, no pay increases and the degradation of benefits.

All we have to do is look at corporate behavior in recent years to know what Tenet will attempt to do to the workforce at Waterbury Hospital, in fact they are already doing it by having the current hospital administration demand the abolition of the pension for the nurses and take backs on other benefits they currently have.

The requirements contained in Section (5)(b) of Bill No 5257 are the minimal conditions that should be put on Tenet or any other for profit company that wants to buy a non-profit hospital in our state in order to reign in the type of corporate behavior we have witnessed across our country.

These requirements will help preserve good paying jobs that our local economy so desperately needs. If Tenet does not have such requirements I will guarantee that they will at some point engage in all the anti-worker attacks I mentioned previously in order to squeeze a profit out of this hospital, because labor is about the only place they can squeeze out enough expense in order to generate the the kind of profit their shareholders will expect.

I urge you to approve this bill with the five clauses protecting the workers in the case of any for profit take-over of non-profit hospitals.