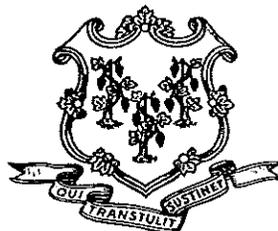


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February 27, 2014

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. I am here to testify in support of SB 220 AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF LABOR HISTORY IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM.

In the words of the Czech writer Milan Kundera, "The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting". We must teach our children to remember. They cannot remember if they are not taught.

Do students know the story of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire and its importance for The New Deal and the passage of the National Labor Relations Act? Do they know what the "Wobblies" stood for? Do they know who the "Molly McGuires" were? Do they appreciate the historical significance of Eugene V. Debs, Samuel Gompers, and John L. Lewis? Have they learned the history of the Pullman strike? Have they read about the murder trials of "Big Bill" Haywood and Joe Hill? Do they understand that without labor unions there would be no leisure on weekends? Do they realize the inhuman and degrading conditions that the workers of the United States endured before labor successfully organized? Have they learned of the revolutionary

use of social science in the "Brandeis Brief"? I fear they have not. These are but a few of the important historical lessons our children should be taught about the labor movement and the enlightened progress it has championed and helped to realize not only for union members but for the general benefit of society.

The history of organized labor is so much more than job-site action and organizing. Unions pushed state and federal elected officials and judges to grant workers the right to collective bargaining. This struggle taught individual workers that they can achieve success with dignity if they assert their collective power. This right is now being challenged. Students should know what is at stake in this challenge.

Organized Labor was a crucial partner in the fight for mine safety laws, workers' compensation laws, and the passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. Labor fought for the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 among many others. Currently, organized labor is a key supporter of marriage equity. Without the contribution of organized labor, the average worker, even the average non-union worker, would have many fewer rights and benefits in employment. We owe it to the Children of Connecticut to teach them of these extraordinary contributions so that they can remember and win the battle of memory against forgetting.