

Testimony Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee
February 18, 2014

Good Afternoon,

Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak. My name is Martha Gothers. I am an Assistant Clerk at the Hartford Probate Court. I've been with the Court now for 1.5 years.

I want to thank you for having this hearing and raising HB 5066, An Act Concerning Certain Workers' Rights to Collectively Bargain. If you all really knew how probate employees were treated and our lack of voice on the job, I am convinced you all would support this legislation.

To work for the probate courts requires being able to read and interpret state laws and implement rules of the court. My job specifications are to evaluate various types of filings including decedent's estates and trusts. I must prepare correspondence, schedule hearings, respond to inquiries from attorneys and other interested parties. It requires a certain amount of education and experience. To which my co-workers and myself have years of on the job experience and expertise. My previous work experience was for the Federal Courts for 20 years. I have had many responsibilities in which I worked with highly confidential information with many federal agencies.

However, when it comes to our working conditions, all of that is ignored.

I do not understand why, simply because I work for probate, I should be denied a voice on the job. This legislation would make that right. With our experience and education, if we worked elsewhere we would be paid better. Why can't we negotiate for that like all other workers in this state?

This legislation will not force us to unionize and it won't force the state or probate to pay us more money. What it will do is treat probate employees with the respect we deserve. If we are able to represent the court, and are trusted to carry out these complex duties, why should we be denied something so basic?

Thank you for your time.