

**AFSCME COUNCIL 15
CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF POLICE UNIONS**

**TESTIMONY OF ERIC R. BROWN – GENERAL COUNSEL
BEFORE THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY
PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY COMMITTEE**

MARCH 11, 2014

**IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 5533
AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE FOR PUBLIC
EMPLOYEES WITH POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER**

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee, my name is Eric Brown and I am general counsel for the Connecticut Council of Police Unions – AFSCME Council 15. We represent 58 local police unions in the state of Connecticut and over 3500 certified municipal police officers.

I speak today in favor of H.B. 5533 – An Act Concerning Workers' Compensation Coverage For Public Employees with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

On December 14, 2012, our nation witnessed one of the most horrific mass shootings in history. First to arrive on the scene that day were police officers from the Town of Newtown Police Department who were immediately confronted with full horror of what had occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

The horror and tragedy of the event was unmatched in our nation's grisly history of school shootings. Those officers who arrived, many of them parents of small children themselves were immediately faced with a threat to their own lives, and even more frightening to these heroes, a threat to each of the hundreds of lives that remained in the school that terrible morning.

Searching in close groups going door-to-door in the darkened hallways, their vision clouded by the fog of smoke, and their hearing disturbed by the echoes in the hallways, these police officers searched for the monsters who had caused the carnage, not knowing where he might lurk. One police officer said that he was sure that ceiling tiles were moving as the perpetrator tried to escape through the ceiling.

For days after the event, Newtown police officers aided by state and federal personnel cleaned up the scene witnessing the death and destruction for hours on end as they went about their work.

To almost everyone's surprise after that event, those officers had no way of recovering through Connecticut's workers' compensation system for their losses, even though their injuries and their suffering were just as real as if they had broken an ankle or torn a rotator cuff that day. But because Connecticut does not recognize mental injuries under our workers' compensation scheme, no workers' compensation benefits were made available to them.

This bill, in a very narrow and precise way, will address that failing on the part of the workers' compensation system so that if any of our public employees ever face a similar event, our public employers will be required to provide them with workers compensation benefits the same as if they had suffered a physical injury.

Our police officers saved hundreds of lives that day. Aren't the lives of their fellow officers who might face the same type of tragic event in the future, worth saving as well?