

February 17, 2015

TO: Labor and Public Employee Committee
RE: H.B. 5860 an Act Recognizing Probate Court Employees as State Employees

Good Afternoon, members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee.

I am Sydney Elkin, Probate Judge for the District of West Hartford and President of the Connecticut Probate Assembly., which is made up of the 54 Probate Judges elected across our State.

The Assembly last met in January and was not aware of this bill at the time so, as a group, it has not been formally discussed.

The Assembly, therefore, takes no position on the bill at this time but would like you all to be aware of certain information as you consider this bill.

Probate Judges, as you, are elected to serve the public. Our staff plays a integral and vital role in ensuring that our constituents' needs are met appropriately, with courtesy and respect and in a manner that engenders confidence in the office to which we are elected.

Most excel in their knowledge of the probate system and genuinely care for the men, women and children who come through our doors with life changing and often traumatic situations. They are often called the "face" of the probate system. Much like you who trust in your staffs to provide the utmost in service, we also depend on their confidence, trustworthiness and reliability to do our work.

The Probate Assembly has not yet taken a position on this bill. Through discussions, many are in favor of the spirit of the bill and many are not. The bill as it stands leaves many questions to be answered in its detail.

May I suggest that since it affects so many, that the bill not be acted on as yet and a Committee of legislators, judges, clerks and union representatives meet in an effort to craft a bill that addresses the concerns of many staff members who are not familiar with this process.

Thank you for your attention.