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**TESTIMONY - LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE
MARCH 3, 2015**

Good afternoon Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak, and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee.

My name is Glenn Terlecki and I am the President of the Connecticut Police and Fire Union (CPFU). Our Union represents approximately 900 State employees who serve this State in firefighting and law enforcement professions. I am here today to speak in favor of:

Raised H.B. No. 6873

“AN ACT CONCERNING INJURED VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND SICK LEAVE BENEFITS.”

We are respectfully requesting the current law under Section 5-249 be amended to clarify that any state employee shall be allowed to use his/her accrued sick leave with pay to recuperate from an injury occurred while VOLUNTEERING for a local volunteer fire department.

The CPFU has a professional firefighter member of the Bradley Airport Fire Department who sustained an injury while volunteering on her personal time with the Broadbrook/East Windsor Volunteer Fire Department. Pursuant to Connecticut Workers' Compensation law our member was compensated by the insurance company for the town of East Windsor while recovering from her injury. Unfortunately, the law only allows a maximum benefit amount which does not nearly cover her salary with the State.

This bill does not give state employees additional sick leave benefits nor does it increase the benefit amount paid by workers' compensation. The bill simply allows a state employee to use his/her existing accrued sick leave to offset the loss of income while recovering from an injury received while performing the duties of a volunteer firefighter.

The *current* law under Section 5-247 is apparently being used to prevent our member from using her accrued state sick time to recuperate from her injury. This is bad public policy and works to discourage state employees from serving as volunteer firefighters. Even though volunteer firefighters are passionate about protecting their communities, if the cost of such activity potentially means the loss of substantial income, the risk will be too great to chance. Without change in legislation, small towns and communities will see a drop in volunteers as word spreads that this is the practice of the State.

I ask for your support in passing this legislation and thank you for your continued support to public employees.

Respectfully submitted,

Glenn Terlecki, President

Connecticut Police and Fire Union