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## TESTIMONY – Labor and Public Employees Committee Hearing

February 25, 2016

In SUPPORT of H.B. No. 5262

Good afternoon Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak and all distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. I would like to thank you for your continued efforts on behalf of 900 public safety professionals and for taking time out of your busy schedules to review testimony in support of this very important bill.

My name is Glenn Terlecki and I am the President of the Connecticut Police and Fire Union. Our Union represents State employees in law enforcement and firefighting professions. My testimony is in SUPPORT of Raised H.B. No. 5262.

### **“AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE FOR CURRENT AND FORMER UNIFORMED MEMBERS OF PAID OR VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS.”**

During most calls for service a firefighter is alert to his or her surroundings and knows where the threat is coming from. A firefighter's training and experience is vital in their ability to suppress fires, safely remove individuals from perilous situations and provide emergency medical response to those in need of help. Despite their best effort, the one silent threat that cannot be detected at the scene of a call or prepared for during training is the threat of cancer. Numerous research studies have shown that firefighters are at a greater risk to develop certain types of cancer than are individuals in other occupations. Although studies continues in attempt to determine the reason for increased cancer rates in firefighters, many researchers believe that because of the wide variety of chemicals and materials used in construction of houses, buildings, automobiles and other various structures, firefighters of today are exposed to a greater amount of unknown toxins than firefighters of decades ago.

A 2010 study conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) looked at whether firefighters have a higher risk of cancer and other causes of death due to job exposures. Approximately 30,000 firefighters from three major cities across the country were identified for the study. The study concluded that firefighters were at higher risk of respiratory, digestive, and urinary system cancers compared to the general population. The study also drew a direct correlation between firefighting and malignant mesothelioma - finding the rate of mesothelioma to be two times greater than normal.

The firefighting profession is a hazardous duty occupation unlike any other. The exposure to silent but deadly materials is often unknown and will many times show no adverse side effects until years after contact. We as citizens entrust our firefighters with a great deal of responsibility. They have chosen a noble profession that protects us and keeps us safe; for that, we as citizens are very grateful. This legislation is now our chance to keep them safe and protect them.

I strongly encourage you to support this legislation and thank you for your continued support to public employees.

**Glenn Terlecki, President**  
**Connecticut Police and Fire Union**