



**IN SUPPORT OF S.B. No. 134 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SEVERE MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL IMPAIRMENT AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE.**

**February 25, 2016**

Good afternoon Chairmen Gomes and Tercyak, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee.

My name is Brian Anderson, and I am the chief legislative advocate for Council 4 AFSCME, a labor union representing 35,000 workers, including approximately 2,300 municipal police officers.

We **support** SB 134. This bill would expand workers' compensation coverage to police officers, fire fighters and ambulance workers who suffer severe mental or emotional impairment, including Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, on the job.

The police officers we proudly represent put their lives on the line every day to protect our communities and keep us safe. The least we can do for them is to right a terrible wrong that occurred with the evisceration of workers' compensation benefits more than 20 years ago.

As you know, many states cover PTSD under workers compensation, but Connecticut is not one of them. The time is past due to extend workers' compensation to cover PTSD.

PTSD is a serious problem. It's a debilitating condition caused by trauma with symptoms that range from emotional detachment and inability to feel pleasure to severe anxiety, insomnia, hostile behavior, blackouts and thoughts of suicide.

Across the state, in large cities and small towns, police officers suffer from PTSD that is the result of responding to violent incidents. The most notable example is the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre.

One of the first responders that terrible day was Newtown Police Officer Thomas Bean. He was diagnosed with PTSD and unable to return to work. His pay was cut by 50%, and the town tried to stop his disability payments.

I vividly remember a Hartford Courant article in which Officer Bean spoke frankly about the permanent trauma he suffered. "Officer Bean was killed that day," he told the Courant, referring to the massacre. "I can never be that person again."

Getting through a normal day has been a struggle for Officer Bean, who has trouble sleeping and suffers crippling flashbacks.

Sadly, there are many stories like Officer Bean's. They are stories of courage and grace under the most extreme pressure. But they are also stories of emotional and financial hardship that never ends. We can no longer afford to ignore the cost of psychological injuries and trauma suffered by those who keep us safe and keep us out of harm's way.

Council 4 vigorously urges you to support SB 134. I would be happy to answer any questions.