SENATOR Osten (19th): This is the Appropriations Public Hearing for Transportation and I have Travis Woodward up first. Hi, Travis. Nice to see you. Don’t forget to push the button on. There you go.

TRAVIS WOODWARD: Senator Osten, members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Travis Woodward. I’m an engineer with the Department of Transportation and I’m also the President of CSEA/SCIU, local 2001, our P4 Bargaining Unit. I am testifying today to raise your awareness of wasted taxpayer dollars that the state of Connecticut spends every year for work that should be done in-house. In the fall of 2016, the Department of Transportation performed a number of cost-effectiveness evaluations for outsourcing project inspection, project-design, and bridge-safety inspections.

Those evaluations showed that project inspections completed by in-house state employees could be completed in many cases at half the cost of outside consultants. Lobbyists for the engineering services industry will tell you that a new report issued by NYU’s Tanden School of Engineering indicates a savings if engineering work were performed by privatizing state services. This report’s findings
used flawed metrics to evaluate personnel fringe benefit rates and overhead rates. The report also uses profit data submitted in survey responses from private firms instead of actual data from Departments of Transportation. Unfortunately, the report neglects to corroborate this surveyed data with actual audited reports. The cost benefit evaluations and cost-effectiveness evaluations performed by our own DOT here used statutory costing for fringes and benefits for both state employees and private consultants. Our own DOT’s cost-effectiveness evaluations used a template developed by the state contracting standards board. The department’s report provides apples-to-apples comparisons including benefits, fringes, and overhead from previous project audits. The comparisons also include state employees unfunded liability.

Outsource consultants bear a large additional cost from profits that are built into each contract that obviously state employees don’t bear. State perform these evaluations using recent historical data from inspection contracts. If state employees were utilized in lieu of consultants, massive savings from 38 to 67 percent could be achieved. For large projects utilizing in-house state employees could save an estimated 5.5 million dollars per contract according to this evaluation. That would be like the mix-master bridge, the Q-bridge, and other large construction projects. CSEA has been saying for years that privatization is a huge waste of resources and the department’s own evaluations prove our point. Connecticut could save millions by performing more work in-house if only the Department of Transportation weren’t so short-staffed. CSEA estimates that if all construction projects had been
performed by in-house state employees, Connecticut would have saved an average of 75 million dollars annually. The department’s evaluations highlight understaffing as a serious obstacle to obtaining these savings.

There are currently over 450 vacancies at the Department of Transportation at all levels that will remain unfilled unless the Office of Policy and Management grants the authority to fill them. In order to do this, there needs to be more funds available to hire. Help us end the shell game – yep, help us end this shell game of starving the state’s budgets – state budget’s personnel line item. The result is a much higher operating expensive line item that is less scrutinized by taxpayers that we all serve.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Thank you very much, Travis. And just so you know, when the Commissioner was here earlier, he refuted the report that you also cited, and he said that they are coming out with another report with more accurate data in it and that he also said the same things that you said, that the report did not have the metrics in it that, that were, was relative to the work that you’re being, that is being done by in-house.

TRAVIS WOODWARD: The only fact that the Commissioner got wrong is we are not using Chronos at the DOT. Thankfully.


SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Sure. Thank you, madam chair. So, is there a reason why the DOT isn’t part
of that system rollout?

TRAVIS WOODWARD: What’s that? Chronos?

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Chronos.

TRAVIS WOODWARD: I’m not sure. That, I heard it was just gonna be used for 24/7 operations and for like DCF and Corrections. That’s all I know about it. I heard it was supposed to replace the Atlas system, which we were never on. I mean, I am here to talk a little bit about privatization, but the Chronos system was flawed when it came in. The GPS system was showing people working in Oklahoma and the Philippines when they were obviously still in Connecticut. It doesn’t speak to Core and doesn’t enter any time in our Core system. It doesn’t work for construction because we code to eight jobs every two weeks. There is no way that a GPS unit or a time clock can tell you which project to Core to because they don’t know what you’re working on when you get to your computer.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Well thanks for your insight on that. The Department of Administrative Services was, you know, pretty high up reporting rollout and efficiency, you know, to be realized and stuff like that. Thank you. I appreciate that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Any other comments or questions? Seeing none, thank you very much, Travis. Alex Finch. Good afternoon. You just have to hit that button right there. There you go. Now you can talk.

ALEX FINCH: Thank you very much. Good afternoon,
Senator Osten and members of the Appropriation Committee. My name is Alexander Finch. I am a state employee at the Department of Transportation in the Office of Environmental Planning and a resident of New Haven. I am here today to say that the state has many opportunities to decrease expenses now and make investments that will lead to a more fiscally stable future.

In the past, multiple studies have shown that there are services that are contracted out to private firms at an additional cost that are also performed by state employees. It has been my experience at the Department of Transportation that state employees are the best people to stay up-to-date on current regulations of federal and state resource agencies. We often take on the responsibility of educating private contractors and consultants about changes or additions to regulations in reviewing the work produced by private contractors. State employees, through our constant communications with other state agencies, best know the intent of regulations and ensure that they are followed protecting Connecticut’s environment.

Over the past decade, state employees have deferred raises and have diminished benefits packages through concessions. We have sacrificed to help the state with its budget issues. This has led to incoming employees being less costly to employ than ever. As well, new hires are also more educated than they have ever been. Connecticut needs more maintenance and improvements to our transportation infrastructure, and state employees are the most cost-effective way to deliver that.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Thank you very much. How long
have you worked at the Department of Transportation?

ALEX FINCH: Eight years.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): So, you are one of those new employees, kinda sorta? Kinda sorta?

ALEX FINCH: Yeah, kinda new. Kinda transitioning into older employee, I guess.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): It’ll be nice to see the next generation come through. Is there any comments or questions? Seeing none, thank you very – Whoops, I’m sorry. Representative Dathan.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): I’m sorry. Just a quick question. I am sorry I was late. One question I asked another committee the other day was the use of when hiring people, use of systems and technology, applicant tracking systems – is that – when you talk about – in your department, are you doing that to fill your 50 positions that you need?

ALEX FINCH: Yeah. I would say over the past eight or nine months, that new system has been put in place.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): And which system are you using?

ALEX FINCH: I’m not sure exactly the system. I’m not the one administrating it. I’ve actually just applied for transfers within the department, so I have some experience, and I know that the system changed, and it’s the new system that DIS has employed. The Connecticut – it’s the Connecticut Jobs Portal.
REP. DATHAN (142ND): Okay. Great. Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Any comments or questions? Thank you very much for coming out. Okay. I look forward to seeing you next year. That means you can come back again. Okay. Thank you very much. Yeah, you don’t have to do anything with that. It’s okay. Are there any other people who I have not signed up to testify that would like to testify? Do you want to come up, young lady? [Laughing] All right. Is there anybody else that would like to testify that is not signed up? Is there anybody else who would like to testify who is not signed up? Seeing none, I call this public hearing adjourned. Have a nice weekend, everybody.