Good afternoon Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Sal Luciano and I am proud to serve as the President of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, a federation of hundreds of local unions representing more than 220,000 members in the private sector, public sector, and building trades. Our members live and work in every city and town in our state and reflect the diversity that makes Connecticut great. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 16 An Act Concerning the Adult Use of Cannabis.

The Connecticut AFL-CIO supports the concept of legalizing adult use of cannabis, but we think SB 16 falls short. This bill could be greatly improved by ensuring that the jobs created in this new emerging industry are family-sustaining jobs with living wages, good benefits and safe working conditions. The best way to do that is to include a labor peace agreement in the bill.

A labor peace agreement is an arrangement between an employer and a union in which one or both sides agree to waive certain rights with regard to union organizing and related activity. The essential purpose is to compel employers to grant organizing concessions in exchange for promises not to strike, picket or otherwise disrupt an employer’s operations. Typical employer concessions can include allowing union organizers into the workplace, refraining from expressing negative opinions about a union and intervening in an organizing campaign, and recognizing a union based on signed cards rather than by the results of a secret ballot election.

The marijuana industry is a job generator. Without labor peace agreements, there’s no guarantee that these jobs will be well paid, safe, and respectable jobs. Providing livable wages, health insurance, retirement benefits, and paid leave in excess of minimum state requirements will provide stability that will lessen turnover and reduce involvement in the underground market. Labor peace also protects the health and welfare of workers and consumers. A well-trained workforce will be able to produce quality products that meet production safety standards. They will make sure that the establishment and equipment used is clean and safe.

Collective bargaining agreements can also help address disparities in the market by providing equal opportunities for women, people of color, LGBTQ individuals, veterans, and people with disabilities to own businesses or work within the industry. They also ensure that workers have an independent voice and can speak out about any compliance concerns without fear of retaliation. Workers on the front line are often the first to note health, safety, and environmental problems.

If Connecticut is going to join our surrounding states in legalizing marijuana, it’s important that we build the foundation to ensure that the jobs created will be a net positive for our state. We urge the Committee to join us in supporting the addition of a labor peace agreement to SB 16. We look forward to an opportunity to work with you to develop that language. Thank you.