Labor and Public Employees Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 11, 2020

1:00 PM in Room 1A of the LOB

The meeting was called to order at 1:10 PM by Chairman, Rep. Porter R. 094.

The following committee members were present:

Senators: Kushner J. S24; Miner C. S30; Osten C. S19

Representatives: Hall J. 007; Polletta J. 068; Porter R. 094; Smith R. 108; Vargas E. 006; Wilson Pheanious P. 053; Winkler M. 056

Absent were:

Senators: Lesser M. S09

Representatives: Fishbein C. 090; Luxenberg G. 012; Rutigliano D. 123

I. The meeting was called to order at 1:10 PM by Rep. Porter who welcomed those in attendance. The emergency procedures were read by Sen. Kushner.

II. Both chairwomen welcomed those attending.

III. Sen. Kushner asked for a motion to move the following agenda concepts to a consent calendar:

AN ACT CONCERNING CALL CENTERS AND NOTICE OF CLOSURES

AN ACT CONCERNING DOMESTIC WORKERS

AN ACT CONCERNING STATE WORKFORCE STUDY ON RETIRING EMPLOYEES
AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION COMMISSION'S MINOR AND TECHNICAL LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL

AN ACT CONCERNING PER DIEM EQUITY FOR STATE BOARD OF MEDIATION AND ARBITRATION ARBITRATORS

AN ACT CONCERNING BREASTFEEDING IN THE WORKPLACE

AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF INTERNSHIPS AND STUDENT TEACHING IN COLLEGE ENVIRONMENTS

The motion was moved by Sen. Kushner and seconded by Rep. Hall. After discussion, the motion passed unanimously:

YEA: 11 NAY: 0

A motion was made by Sen. Kushner and seconded by Rep. Hall to raise concept #1:

AN ACT CONCERNING RIGHTS OF A PUBLIC EMPLOYEE TO JOIN OR SUPPORT A UNION

Rep. Smith asked if there would be Republican input since many concepts were not included on this agenda. Rep. Porter said many screenings were held regarding the concepts and Republican bills would be included. Rep. Miner asked if there were circumstances in CT now requiring this bill. Sen. Kushner said other states have already taken measures. This would be a pro-active rather than reactive measure. Sen. Miner suggested amending the title by replacing the word "easier" with "protecting" rights. Sen. Kushner said she would prefer leaving it as written because it is less constraining and fair. Sen. Miner asked that the vote be taken via roll call. The motion passed:

YEA: 11 NAY: 3

The votes will be held open until 5:00 PM.

A motion was made by Rep. Fishbein and seconded by Rep. Hall to raise concept #2:

AN ACT CONCERNING A FAIR WORK WEEK SCHEDULE

Rep. Porter said this bill would assure stability to families.

The motion passed:

YEA: 8 NAY: 3

Rep. Miner made a motion seconded by Rep. Polletta changes agenda item # 3:
AN ACT CONCERNING PTSI – WORKERS' COMPENSATION FOR EMTS, DOC AND DISPATCHERS

The changes would drop "dispatchers" from this concept and add a new item #18 to the agenda which would only address dispatchers.
Sen. Kushner said the bill should stay as written and changes could be made later. Sen. Miner said there were misunderstandings about the EMT breakdown perimeters. In discussions last year, it was agreed to have a Public Hearing to get more information so the bill would not be jeopardized. Rep. Polletta had concerns this scope would make it difficult for further additions and lessen the chance of being passed. Rep. Porter said emotional wounds often last longer than physical and the bill was expandable. Sen. Kushner said it was agreed that EMTs be included.

The motion failed:
YEA: 4 NAY: 7

A motion was made by Sen. Kushner and seconded by Rep. Hall to vote on the concept as originally presented.

The motion passed:
YEA: 9 NAY: 2

A motion was made by Rep. Vargas and seconded by Rep. Hall to raise concept #6: AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Sen. Miner asked if the concept would affect the court decision regarding volunteers. Sen. Kushner said it was a broad concept and would not suppress this ruling. The motion passed:
YEA: 10 NAY: 2

A motion was made by Sen. Kushner and seconded by Rep. Wilson Pheanious to raise concept #7: AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' RIGHTS

Sen. Miner asked what was in the bill. Rep. Porter said the language was still being drafted to determine what was needed. The motion passed:
YEA: 10 NAY: 1

A motion was made by Sen. Kushner and seconded by Rep. Vargas to raise concept #8: AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Rep. Polletta asked for elaboration of the concept. Rep. Porter said that this language was also being drafted and would determine what was needed. Rep. Johnson is working on a task force and this bill could be the result of the findings. Sen. Kushner said this would be a new concept regarding home health care. Sen. Miner said the theme of the day seemed to be "I don't know" or "We're not prepared to say yet" making it difficult to determine whether to support the concepts. Rep. Smith said the Labor Committee and the State of CT are anti-business, not pro-business. Sen. Kushner said many of the concepts presented today were pro-business. The motion passed:
YEA: 8 NAY: 3

A motion was made by Sen. Kushner and seconded by Rep. Vargas to raise concept #9: AN ACT CONCERNING WORKING CONDITIONS
Rep. Polletta asked if this was the same as a previous bill. Rep. Porter said it was not limited to that. Sen. Miner had the same objection he had to the previous concept regarding clarity. Rep. Smith said he may be supportive once he understood exactly what was being presented.
The motion passed:
YEA: 8  NAY: 3
A motion was made by Rep. Wilson-Pheanious and seconded by Rep. Vargas to raise concept #11:
AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSPORT NETWORK COMPANY DRIVERS

Rep. Polletta said the public hearing on minimum wage left issues regarding Uber and Lyft drivers. He asked if the results of investigation determined if any changes were needed in the bill. Rep. Porter said this year's the Public Hearing on should bring it to conclusion. Sen. Kushner said this is a new and growing business and their main responsibility was to address worker’s concerns. Rep. Polletta said there was no need to get involved since it was already working fine and this bill could just raise problems. Both sides had to be heard. Rep. Kushner said she found it disturbing and unfair that a driver can take a fare to CT and pick up a returning fare, but not the reverse. Sen. Miner said that CT and MA may have different sets of rules, but CT should be more inclusive. Rep. Smith said a reciprocal bill had passed and this was no longer an issue.
The motion passed:
YEA: 8  NAY: 3
A motion was made by Rep. Vargas and seconded by Sen. Kushner to raise concept #12:
AN ACT CONCERNING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS FOR AGRICULTURAL WORKERS.

Sen. Miner said he didn’t realize there were any groups barred from joining the union but if this were the case, couldn’t the workers unite? Sen. Kushner said there may be many but under Federal law, agriculture workers are excluded. Sen. Miner said that in a short legislative session, time is not on our side to get much done and asked about the impact concerns. Rep. Vargas said although he is not up-to-date on agricultural issues, the National Labor Relations Board excludes military, State and municipal workers. Full or part time, the State rules. Only California has an avenue for agriculture workers and anyone, union or not, can go before their labor board.
The motion passed:
YEA: 7  Nay: 3
A motion was made by Sen. Kushner and seconded by Rep. Wilson Pheanious to raise concept # 13L
AN ACT CONCERNING STRENGTHENING THE PROBATE COURT SYSTEM.

Rep. Smith said he spoke to a judge who said there was no need for this bill. Rep. Porter said "Workers are not judges". Rep. Miner said the title should reflect the right of court personnel to organize, not "strengthen". The motion passed:
YEA: 8  NAY: 3
A vote was taken for the consent calendar on #s 4, 5, 10, 14, 15, 16 and 17.
The votes will be held open until 5:00 PM in room 3800.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2020 at 2:00 PM in room 2A of the LOB.

Sen. Kushner thanked everyone for their efforts. The committee stood in recess until 5:00 PM when the meeting would adjourn.

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Committee Clerk                          Assistant Clerk