

SEIU Local 511



CONNECTICUT EMPLOYEES UNION INDEPENDENT

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Government Administration and Elections

Testimony by Carl Chisem, President

Connecticut Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 511

In Support of S.B. 820 AN ACT CONCERNING A STATE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

In Support of S.B. 5 AN ACT CONCERNING INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR ABSENTEE VOTING, SAFE AND SECURE IN-PERSON VOTING AND VOTER REGISTRATION

In Support of S.B. 1076 AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AND PRIVATIZATION OF STATE SERVICES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT HEALTH CENTER

Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, my name is Carl Chisem and I am President of the Connecticut Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 511. We represent over 3,600 blue collar maintenance and service State workers. Our members provide valuable services within our state facilities. They cook, clean, repair, maintain and deliver in Connecticut's State buildings, hospitals, college campuses, airports, roads, bridges, and parks. I write in strong support of S.B. 820 and S.B. 5.

As federal courts and state legislatures weaken the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, Connecticut must take this opportunity to create its own state-level Voting Rights Act. Too many barriers and burdens exclude voters of color from the political process. S.B. 820 will provide the tools needed to root out racial discrimination and reduce the evolving obstacles to voting that black and brown people continually face.

Expanding Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) beyond the Department of Motor Vehicles to other state agencies and restoring the right to vote to people on parole are both common sense measures that will encourage greater participation in the democratic process. S.B. 5 will help to achieve a process of voting that works for more people. However, people re-entering their communities on parole must not be required to pay the often very large fines related to their conviction to regain their right to vote. Qualifying to vote has no correlation to wealth and is technically a poll tax. AVR will enhance the security and integrity of our elections by eliminating outdated addresses and duplicative registrations through an automatic process leaving towns and cities with accurate voter lists.

CEUI Local 511 represents approximately 200 workers at the University of Connecticut Health Center. I ask the members of this committee to support S.B. 1076 and all efforts to keep UCH in the public domain by requiring the University of Connecticut Health Center to obtain approval by the General Assembly prior to soliciting bids

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or a request for proposals for a privatization or public-private partnership contract.

UConn Health is a high-performing asset for the State of Connecticut. It generates \$2.2 billion in overall impact to the state and contributes over 10,000 jobs to the state economy. UCH provides an affordable, top-rated education for CT citizens by training the state's future doctors, dentists, and scientists. Class sizes continue to grow, and the School of Medicine is in the top 10 medical schools in the nation for diversity of its student body as ranked by US News and World Report.

As the state's only public hospital, UCH provides cutting-edge patient care supported by academic research and outstanding faculty. Over 1 million patients visit annually, including thousands of underserved citizens. UConn physicians, dentists, residents, and medical and dental students provide thousands of hours of free healthcare to Connecticut's most medically vulnerable and instills in its health profession students the commitment to serve our state's most disadvantaged.

UConn Health is a valuable and important institution in our state. I urge the committee to protect this asset at all costs. Requiring approval by the General Assembly before moving forward towards privatization will help to protect this important Connecticut resource.

I urge the committee to support S.B. 820, S.B. 5 and S.B. 1076.

Thank you.