

Labor and Public Employees Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6595

AN ACT CONCERNING LABOR MATTERS RELATED TO COVID-19,

Title: PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT AND OTHER STAFFING ISSUES.

Vote Date: 3/25/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/11/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor and Public Employees Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

H.B. 6595 proposes changes to the general statutes related to labor issues, personal protective equipment, and staffing issues in order to address employee needs that have arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Substitute Language – LCO No. 6606

The substitute language made several technical modifications to the changes contemplated in this bill. For example, the substitute language clarified that the legal presumption in Section 3 applies to all existing and future COVID-19 claims, expanded the definition of personal protective equipment, extended eligibility of Section 12 to include first responders, and altered a few of the effective dates contained within the bill.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Kevin Dillion, Executive Director, Connecticut Airport Authority:

Mr. Dillion submitted written testimony in opposition to Section 30 of this bill. Their testimony stated that the CAA opposes the additional requirements for public works project contracts valued at ten million dollars or more. They also oppose any provisions that would further limit its flexibility to enter into contracts with entities it deems qualified and appropriate. They urged the committee to oppose these provisions at a time of immense hardship for the aviation industry. They stressed that these provisions could limit their ability to recover and maintain competitiveness with other regional airports.

Stephen Morelli, Chairman, CT Workers Compensation Commission:

Chairmen Morelli provided written and public hearing testimony about this legislation. They specifically focused their testimony on Section 3 (f) in the bill. In their testimony, they offered insight into the potential impacts this legislation would have on the Commission. They also provided some background on the workers' compensation process. They stated that the Commission is always happy to work with the committee and the legislature to provide the information they have that would be useful.

Kurt Westby, Commissioner, Department of Labor:

Commissioner Westby provided written testimony stating that the Department of Labor supported certain concepts within this proposed bill pertaining to delivering relief to Connecticut employees and employers in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that they were working with the committee to discuss the issues raised within the bill and to help draft language to move this bill forward.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Kim Ackerman, Direct Support Staff, Whole Life:

Ms. Ackerman submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. In her testimony, she detailed her work experience as a healthcare worker during the COVID-19 pandemic, including not receiving adequate personal protective equipment and her workplace's minimal sick leave policy. She urged for the bill to be passed.

Theresa Aisevbonaye, Registered Nurse, University of Connecticut Health Center: Ms.

Aisevbonaye submitted written testimony in support of this bill. In her testimony, she highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on her workplace. Already short-staffed, she detailed the enormous strain the pandemic has had on both her patients and her co-workers. She strongly urges the legislature to pass this bill because she believes it will help healthcare workers, promote productivity, staff and patient safety, and staff retention.

Jill K. Alsgaard, Registered Nurse, UConn Health:

Ms. Alsgaard submitted written testimony in support of this bill. Ms. Alsgaard testified about her experience working in a "biocontained" area of the ICU, which housed only COVID-19 patients. She detailed what it was like to work in this environment without always knowing if there would be enough PPE. She noted that because of this lack of employer-provided PPE, she eventually purchased PPE herself. Ms. Alsgaard also underscored how vital the PTSD/COVID-19 worker's comp component was. She believes that this bill's passage will allow frontline workers to take the time to heal and get help themselves without jeopardizing their livelihood.

Stephen Anderson, President, CSEA SEIU Local 2001:

Mr. Anderson submitted written testimony in support of this bill. He believes that this bill will begin to address the challenges faced by workers when it comes to PPE, providing paid sick leave, and increasing benefits when a job might result in a worker's death. Mr. Anderson views the bill as a necessary response to the pandemic and the right thing to do for the working people of Connecticut.

Michael Baldwin, Radiology Clerkship Director/Associate Director, UConn Health Diagnostic Radiology Residency:

Mr. Baldwin submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. He relayed his experience working as a physician during COVID-19, which included living apart from his children for three months in the early days of the pandemic. For him, to truly recognize the sacrifices of frontline workers means ensuring that they have PPE, workers' compensation, and support for their families if they die.

Jamarah Barnaby-Anderson, Cook Assistant, Department of Veterans Affairs: They submitted written testimony in support of this bill. In particular, their comments focused on Sections 12-14 of the bill. They highlighted their own experience working in unpredictable and dangerous conditions while having chronic asthma. In their testimony, they noted that they ended up testing positive for COVID-19. They urged the committee to consider their testimony when evaluating the importance of hazard pay to employees.

Jody Barr, Executive Director, Council 4 AFSCME:

They submitted written testimony in support of this bill. They highlighted their correction employee members' experiences, who, despite working in perhaps the most COVID-19 contaminated and dangerous workplace, showed up and did their jobs. They stressed that they have members from many different workplaces who have gotten COVID-19 on the job, with some, unfortunately, infecting family members at home. They strongly urged for the bill to be passed.

John Brady, Registered Nurse, Executive Vice President — AFT Connecticut:

Mr. Brady submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. In his testimony, he explained his support for the COVID-19 workers' compensation presumption, PTSD for healthcare workers, PPE stockpile/data transparency, staffing transparency in hospitals, sick time, and hazard pay.

Kyle Brennan, HVAC Supervision, Western Connecticut State University:

Mr. Brennan submitted written testimony in support of this bill. In his testimony he specifically focused on Sections 12-14 in the bill by detailing his experience as an essential worker. Mr. Brennan believes that people who have worked throughout the pandemic should be compensated.

Christina Briggs, Assistant Program Coordinator, Journey Found:

Ms. Briggs submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. Ms. Briggs detailed her experience working at a group home, including the lack of PPE and quarantining for Christmas to ensure her family was safe. She noted that the staff put their lives at risk and would have benefited significantly from hero pay. Because of COVID-19, her husband lost his job, and now they are down to one income. She stated that this bill would be her road to recovery.

Shawn Brown, Administrative Fiscal Assistant – UConn Health, Vice President of Membership – AFT Local 3837:

Mr. Brown submitted written testimony in support of this bill. Mr. Brown testified about his experience working as an employee in the state's only public hospital. He recounted the lack of personal protective equipment, which forced some staff to reuse other people's PPE. Mr. Brown also noted the enormous mental, physical, and emotional stress that frontline workers

have endured without any form of hazard pay. He urged the legislature to pass this legislation.

DeShawn Brownell, Security Officer, Adult Probation Office:

Mr. Brownell submitted written testimony in support of this bill. He detailed his workplace experience as an essential worker. Mr. Brownell expressed his anxiety about getting COVID-19 because of his high blood pressure and his epilepsy. He believes that all mandatory workers deserve hazard pay and deserve compensation when they have to quarantine without using personal time off.

Kim Burns, Registered Nurse, State of Connecticut:

Ms. Burns submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. She wrote in support of the hero pay provision in the bill. Ms. Burns views hero pay as acknowledging the risk she and her colleagues took throughout the pandemic.

Eric Canada, DMHAS, Woodward Hall at Connecticut Valley Hospital:

Mr. Canada submitted written testimony in support of this bill. In particular, he voiced support for the hero pay provision in the bill. Mr. Canada details what it was like to work as a frontline worker in his workplace. There was a lack of PPE, which was a critical issue because there were patients under his care with COVID-19. Unfortunately, he contracted COVID-19 and passed it onto his wife, but thankfully not his son, who was undergoing Chemo at the time. He also detailed how an administrative mistake caused him to have to fight for time off. Mr. Canada asked the legislature to have compassion for staff that takes care of these patients, who do the hard work knowing they are putting themselves in danger.

Candice Carlson, Caseworker, DDS – Individual Home Supports Program:

Ms. Carlson submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. She wrote in support of the hero pay provision within the bill. Ms. Carlson views the hero pay compensation provision as recognition for the sacrifices and extraordinary everyday work by frontline employees.

Jean Castagno, Clinical Office Assistant, UConn Health:

Ms. Castagno submitted written testimony in support of this bill. In her testimony, she detailed what it is like to be a frontline worker. She supports this bill because of several of its provisions including, PPE improvements and hazard pay. She urged the legislature to pass this critical legislation.

Cameron Champlin, Pipefitters Local Union 777:

Mr. Champlin submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. They noted that this bill addresses the issue that put frontline workers at risk, namely the lack of PPE. They believe that these inadequacies should not happen in the future. They also testified in support of workers collecting the appropriate amount of compensation.

Joseph Cherry, Cook, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Mr. Cherry submitted written testimony in support of this bill. In particular, he voiced support of Sections 12-14 because of his work experience as a frontline worker, which he details in his testimony. Mr. Cherry urged the committee to support the bill.

Carl Chisem, President, CEUI -- SEIU Local 511 -- SEIU Local 506:

Mr. Chisem submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. They view this bill and related bills as a first necessary step in rectifying the unequal and disparate treatment that essential workers have long endured. They believe that this bill's passage will go a long way in restoring the dignity essential workers deserve.

Tina Chupas, Coding Reimbursement Specialist, UConn Health:

Ms. Chupas submitted written testimony in support of this bill. She stressed that although she could work at home during the pandemic, many of her colleagues were not. She notes that the lack of PPE made an already stressful situation worse. Ms. Chupas also provided testimony about worker's compensation cases at UConn Health, for which she does the billing. She highlighted the fact that no COVID-19 cases have come across her desk. Ms. Chupas explained that it was her understanding that workers were denied the right to file worker's compensation claims because there was no clear confirmation that they contracted COVID-19 at work. Because of this experience, she strongly urged the legislature to support the bill.

Dino Circosta, Employee – UConn Health, Union Representative – UHP Local 3837:

Mr. Circosta submitted written testimony in support of this bill. He expressed his anger that many of his co-workers had to work without proper personal protective equipment. He also noted that while some essential workers received bonuses for their sacrifices on the frontlines, many were not. He urged the legislature to vote for the bill.

Kyra Clark, Dental Assistant, UConn Health Dental Center:

Ms. Clark submitted written testimony in support of this bill. She noted that according to the CDC, working in dental care settings constitutes a high risk for contracting COVID-19. Ms. Clark explains how stressful it is for employees who worry about possible exposure at work, especially those with underlying conditions. She expressed her hope that dental assistants working at UConn Health are considered essential workers regarding hero pay.

Aida Colon, Home Care Consumer:

Ms. Colon submitted written testimony in support of this bill. A home care consumer, she wrote this testimony on behalf of their two personal care assistants, Linda and Esther. Because of an injury, Ms. Colon needs help with daily tasks such as bathing, cooking, dressing, laundry, and other housework. The PCAs also take her to the grocery store, church, and medical appointments. Ms. Colon believes that PCAs need to be treated with respect and given PPE, hazard pay, and the sick leave they deserve.

Natasha Cruz, Personal Care Attendant:

Ms. Cruz submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. She detailed what her experience has been as a frontline worker and a single parent with two daughters. Ms. Cruz recounted how a co-worker was forced to come back to work even though they were still sick because they could not take off more than a couple of days. She described how even though her customer was ill with COVID-19, she continued providing care despite not having proper personal protective equipment, which caused her to worry about contracting and passing COVID-19 to her daughters. She expressed her belief that she deserves the reassurance of knowing she doesn't have to choose between her livelihood and her family's health.

Dale Cunningham, Staff Nurse — Lawrence & Memorial Hospital, President – AFT Local 5049:

Mr. Cunningham submitted written testimony in support of this bill. In his testimony, he described what it was like as a frontline worker, including experiencing a lack of personal protective equipment. He noted that many of his union members and other frontline healthcare workers had faced obstacles and denials of their workers' compensation claims. He also wrote about Section 32 and the importance of proper staffing levels and transparency.

Jordan DeAngelo, Personal Care Attendant:

They submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. They detailed their experience as a personal care attendant and stressed the importance of their work. Their testimony describes how difficult it was for PCAs to get their hands on personal protective equipment. They also noted that PCAs do not receive health insurance or paid sick leave through their jobs, unlike other healthcare professions. They urged support of this bill so that PCAs, like themselves, receive sick leave, hazard pay, and the benefits they deserve.

Chris DeFrancesco, Communications Specialist – UConn Health, Vice President of Communication – AFT Local 3837:

Mr. DeFrancesco submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. As part of his job, Mr. DeFrancesco tells the stories of healthcare workers. In his testimony, he recounts the story of nurse Maria Budzinski who contracted COVID-19. He conveyed his belief that workers like Maria deserve hazard pay, even if the employer disagrees.

Karen Droz, Home Visitor, TEAM Inc.:

Ms. Droz submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. In her testimony, she detailed her experience as a frontline worker. During a home visit, she was unfortunately exposed to COVID-19 and had to quarantine for 14 days. Fortunately, she was paid and did not have to use her personal time off. However, she knows that other people have had to quarantine more than once and use personal time off. She urged the bill's passage so that workers get hazard pay and support from their employer should they need to quarantine or fall ill.

Danielle Eldredge, Custodian, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Ms. Eldredge submitted written testimony in support of this bill. In her testimony, she focused on Section 12-14 of the bill. She described the stress of her experience as working as a frontline worker. Unfortunately, her workplace has faced outbreaks of COVID-19. She worries about contacting and transmitting COVID-19 to her two teenage boys. She urges the committee to support the bill, which includes hazard pay.

Manuel Estrada, Maintenance Worker, State Capital Building:

Mr. Estrada submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. In his testimony, he noted that while the building is empty of legislators and staff, about 40 maintenance workers and mechanics still come in every day. Mr. Estrada detailed what his job entails as a frontline worker. He noted that, fortunately, his direct employer, SMG, provides special COVID-19 pay for two weeks if workers have to quarantine. However, it takes longer than two weeks to feel better, which was the case for one of Mr. Estrada's co-workers, who had to use a week of his vacation time to recover. Tragically, some family

members of these co-workers' contracted COVID-19, and sadly one family member has been in an induced coma for months. He asked the committee to pass the bill, which will allow them to receive support if they become ill and provide them with hazard pay.

James Evans, Material Storage Supervisor, Southbury Training School:

Mr. Evans provided both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. He testified about his experience as a frontline worker. Like many, as a high-risk individual and having a compromised daughter, he was very concerned about contracting COVID-19 and passing it onto his family. He described how he and his co-workers keep going to work despite the %45 percent of their population testing positive and the four staff deaths. He urged support of the bill, which includes hazard pay and updating the definition of hazard pay.

Denise Falzone, Lead Teacher – TEAM Early Education Program, Union Stewart – 32BJ SEIU:

Ms. Falzone provided both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. In her testimony, she detailed what it is like to be a frontline worker in education. She, unfortunately, experienced COVID-19 firsthand, as did her household family members, during which she was paid and did not have to use personal time off. However, she knows of others who have had to use personal time off because they have had to quarantine multiple times. She notes that even though teachers are essential, her hazard pay and COVID-19 compensation for her work at the hospital turned out to be a rare exception. She urged the committee to support this bill.

Paola Fonseca, Dining Room Supervisor, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Ms. Fonseca provided written testimony in support of this bill. She specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. In her testimony, she detailed her experience as a frontline worker. In particular, she wrote about how scary events have been for her. Ms. Fonseca has high blood pressure and asthma and was concerned about contracting COVID-19 and passing it onto her elderly mother. She underscored that in her 23 years at the DVA, she has never felt so unsafe or so worried that her family's life was in jeopardy because of her job. She urged the committee to support the bill.

Bill Garrity, President – AFT University Health Professionals Local 3837, Divisional Vice President – AFT CT:

Mr. Garrity submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. He detailed what a challenging experience this past year has been working as a registered nurse during COVID-19. He expressed support for the provisions about workers' compensations, PTSD support, and hazard pay in his testimony. He urged the legislature to pass the bill.

NaJhai Gomes-Walton, Storekeeper Assistant, Department of Veterans Affairs:

They provided written testimony in support of this bill. They detailed their experience as a frontline worker. They expressed worry about contracting COVID-19 and potentially exposing family members. They urged the committee to support the bill.

Nancy Gonzalez, Assistant Manager, a Mosaic Group Home:

Ms. Gonzalez provided written testimony in support of this bill. She details her experience as a frontline worker at a group home. Unfortunately, they suffered the loss of a client due to COVID-19, which was incredibly stressful. Many of her co-workers became sick themselves,

which led to the facility being extremely short-staffed. She urged for the bill to be passed, which includes hazard pay and sick leave.

Madeline Granato, Policy Director, The Connecticut Women’s Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF):

Ms. Granato provided written testimony in support of this bill. While they support each section of this bill, they especially support Sections 20-25. They have an amendment recommendation to Section 21 2 (b) lines 1117-1127. They suggest amending this language to make COVID-19 paid sick leave available seven days following this section's effective date. They explained that this change would ensure workers have access to specific paid sick leave more immediately as they continue to work through the public health crisis. CWEALF urges the committee and the legislature to advance the bill.

Ciro Gutierrez, Janitor, University of Connecticut’s School of Social Work:

Mr. Gutierrez provided both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. He detailed his experience as a frontline worker. He noted that cleaners are considered essential workers, yet they have not received any extra compensation. Mr. Gutierrez stressed that this work has risks and that they have witnessed co-workers become sick, and sadly some have died. If they are truly essential workers, they deserve compensation for their sacrifices.

Tasha Hall, Assistant Cook, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Ms. Hall submitted written testimony in support of this bill. She specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. In her testimony, she detailed her experience as a frontline worker and a single mom of 3 children. Ms. Hall testified about how she feared she would contract COVID-19 and leave her girls without a mom. She notes that every day was and is a risk. She urges the committee to support the bill.

Ivonnee Hamm, Registered Nurse, First Vice President – University Health Professionals AFT Local 3837:

Ms. Hamm provided written testimony in support of this bill. As part of her position as the Union Vice President, she recounted hearing from members who were suffering, fearful, anxious, overwhelmed, and feeling underappreciated. She also discussed how traumatic this year has been for healthcare frontline workers. There is no doubt in her mind that frontline workers will have long-term mental health issues related to the pandemic, and she stressed that Connecticut must take care of them.

Dana Havens:

Ms. Havens submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. She recounts her experience working at a group home where all but three staff members and a majority of the residents contracted COVID-19. In her testimony, she describes her firsthand knowledge of how COVID-19 can affect someone long after 10 to 14 days. She noted that she tested positive on November 24th and could not return to work until February 17th. She got paid for the first two weeks, but she pointed out that she took a hit for the remainder of her illness. She urged the passage of the bill, which includes workers’ compensation when they get sick.

Neal Hughes, Assistant Cook, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Mr. Hughes provided written testimony in support of this bill. He explained what it was like working as an essential worker during the pandemic. He described how stressful the

experience. He noted that he came into work despite the considerable risk to his and his family's health. Mr. Hughes urged the committee to support the bill.

Amanda Hutchins Warren, Registered Nurse, Danbury Hospital:

Ms. Hutchins Warren provided written testimony about this bill. She detailed what it was like to work as a frontline healthcare worker. She noted that employees at her hospital did not receive hazard pay, nor did they receive paid time off. Only if they tested positive were those days not counted toward personal time off. She expressed her belief that frontline workers have been trampled on during the last year, including being short-staffed in uncomfortable conditions.

Cynthia Johnson, Personal Care Attendant:

Ms. Johnson provided written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. She recounts her personal experience with becoming her daughter's personal care attendant. Unlike other healthcare professions, Ms. Johnson notes that PCAs do not get paid sick leave or health insurance plans. She emphasizes that Connecticut must do more to meet the needs of home care workers. She urged for the bill to be passed.

Kris Kaminski, Assistant Clerk, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Mr. Kaminski submitted written testimony in support of this bill. He specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. Mr. Kaminski detailed his experience as a frontline worker. He views the support of this bill as one way to correct the emotional and financial injustices that frontline workers have endured and who are continuing to risk their lives. He urged the committee to support the bill.

Gary LaFontaine, Building Superintendent, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Mr. LaFontaine provided written testimony in support of this bill. He specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. Mr. LaFontaine described his experience working as a frontline worker. Unfortunately, he contracted COVID-19 and was hospitalized for five days, and he started feeling better at home after ten days. He stated that he is still suffering from side effects.

Tanya Lemanski, Behavioral Health Unit Supervisor/Registered Nurse, Connecticut Valley Hospital:

Ms. Lemanski provided both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. In her testimony, she details her experience as a frontline worker. Ms. Lemanski wrote about the tremendous strain on the staff among the uncertainty and the fear of contracting the virus. She notes that in her 30+ career, she has never seen anything like what her team went through the last 12 months. Based on their tremendous sacrifices, she believes frontline workers deserve this small relief. She urged for the bill to be passed.

Paula Levy Thomas, Assistant Coordinator, Journey Found:

Ms. Levy Thomas provided both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. She detailed her experience as a frontline worker in a group home. Unfortunately, one of their clients contracted COVID-19 and sadly passed away. She recounted how hard that death hit the staff and how painful that loss still is. She notes that this bill would change her life by lowering her anxiety by ensuring adequate PPE. She urged for the bill to be passed.

Daniel Livingston, Chief Negotiator, SEBAC:

Mr. Livingston submitted written testimony in support of this bill. He notes that while they support all aspects of the bill, he wanted to highlight components in particular – the workers’ compensation presumption and the pandemic pay. In his testimony, Mr. Livingston details why their members believe that these two provisions are critically important to their wellbeing. He emphasized that we live in extraordinary times and that it’s time for an extraordinary response from the General Assembly.

Sal Luciano, President, Connecticut AFL-CIO:

Mr. Luciano provided both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. He thanks the committee for recognizing the enormous toll the COVID-19 pandemic has had on workers, particularly essential workers. They noted their support for the following provision related to; COVID-19 workers’ compensation presumption, workers’ compensation for treatment of post-traumatic stress injury, recall rights, and personal protective equipment. They also highlighted their support for; the COVID-19 data reports, the essential employees pandemic pay grant program, paid sick days, employer unemployment experience rating, project labor agreements, paid sick days for personal care attendants, and hospital nurse staffing. They urged the committee to support the bill.

Ben Ludwig, QCWHVAC Employee, Southbury Training School:

Mr. Ludwig provided both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. He specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. In his testimony, he detailed his experience as a frontline worker. Mr. Ludwig described much he worried about contracting COVID-19, particularly since he has two elderly parents at home and a wife with asthma. He urged the committee to support the bill.

Lisa Mancini, Head Cook, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Ms. Mancini provided written testimony in support of this bill. She specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. In her testimony, she detailed her experience as a frontline worker. Ms. Mancini has not seen her family in a year because of the fear of passing COVID-19 to them. She noted that several of her co-workers and residents test positive for the virus, which caused her to have extreme fear. She urged the committee to support the bill.

Brittany Manley, Registered Nurse, Danbury Hospital:

Ms. Manley submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. She details her experience working as a frontline healthcare worker. Ms. Manley recounted that before COVID-19, she would have a patient pass away about once a month. But during last year, she saw patients die every shift. She notes that these deaths were brutal, and there was nothing she could do to stop it. She recalled an incident where a clerical mix-up caused her to go down to the morgue, where she saw the refrigerator truck full of dead bodies stacked on bunk beds. She testified that that experience changed her and that she can still recall “the feeling of despair that settled in my soul.” Ms. Manley stressed that frontline workers have not received hazard pay, bonuses, or mental health services.

Latiera Massey, Home Visitor, TEAM Inc.:

Ms. Massey provided both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. She recounted her experience as a frontline worker. Ms. Massey had two COVID-19 exposures and was required to quarantine for 14 days each time. She explained that she was compelled to utilize her personal time off. Ms. Massey believes that workers should have hazard pay and be allowed to receive compensation without using PTO.

Tara Maxwell, Direct Support Staffer, Mosaic:

Ms. Maxwell submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. She recounted her experience as a frontline worker. She testified that employees at her workplace were only given COVID-19 pay for seven days and nothing beyond that. She urged for the bill to be passed.

Rick Melita, Director – CT State Council, SEIU:

Mr. Melita provided both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. He noted that his union has dozens of workers in high-risk job titles to COVID-19. He pointed to various provisions of the bills that they support including, stockpiling PPE, proving paid sick leave, providing a rebuttable presumption of COVID-19, ensure recall rights to laid-off workers, and benefits if a worker dies. He urged the General Assembly to go big in its response and urged them to support this bill.

Marlie Meranville, Employee, Sbarro's:

Ms. Meranville provided written testimony in support of this bill. She wrote about the experience she and her mom have had working as essential workers. She notes that she gets insurance through her Dad because she is 24 years old. She also testified that her job does not provide paid sick days. Ms. Meranville believes that plaza workers should get hazard pay and support if they get sick.

Jean Morningstar, Chief Steward-UHP, AFT Local 3837:

Ms. Morningstar submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. She conveyed how difficult it has been for their members who work in healthcare. To demonstrate why she feels the bill is important, she recounted the story of a member who contracted COVID-19 and the challenges he faced. She stressed that frontline workers need safety nets. Ms. Morningstar urged for the bill to be passed.

Zofia Mroczek, Cook, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Ms. Mroczek submitted written testimony in support of this bill. She specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. Ms. Mroczek detailed her experience as a frontline worker. She described how unsafe she felt at work and how stressful the last year has been. Unfortunately, she contracted COVID-19 and was out of work for a month with severe symptoms. She urged the committee to support the bill.

John Murphy, United Auto Workers Local 376:

Mr. Murphy submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. He praised the following provisions, Section 1, Section 2, Section 4, and Section 5. In his testimony, he detailed why each provision is necessary. Mr. Murphy urged for the bill to be passed.

Donna Napomoceno, Union Steward-UHP, AFT Local 3837:

Ms. Napomoceno provided written testimony in support of this bill. In her testimony, she discusses what it is like being a frontline worker. She notes that there was often not enough personal protective equipment for staff. This forced staff to wear the same masks for a week and even share PPE. She emphasized how nerve-racking the experience has been and how fearful she was at infecting her children and grandchildren. She urges support of this bill, which she believes will eliminate much of the stress for many people.

Rigoberto Nava, Cook, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Mr. Nava submitted written testimony in support of this bill. He specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. Mr. Nava detailed his experience as a frontline worker in his testimony. He urged the committee to support the bill.

Jason Negrini, Lead Mail Handler, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Mr. Negrini provided written testimony in support of this bill. He specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. Mr. Negrini detailed his experience as a frontline worker in his testimony. He recounted how fearful he was at putting his spouse and kids at risk because of his job. He urged the committee to support the bill.

Kathy Nizielski, Custodian, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Ms. Nizielski submitted written testimony in support of this bill. He specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. Ms. Nizielski detailed his experience as a frontline worker in his testimony. She recounted how stressful it has been. Unfortunately, she contracted COVID-19 on December 11 and was out of work for two weeks. She notes that she still has lingering side effects. Ms. Nizielski also explained that she has gone through bouts of depression and is paranoid about contracting the virus again. She urged the committee to support the bill, including hazard pay, which she believes will boost morale.

Vincent Oliver, Worker/Service Plaza Cleaner, Alltown Gas:

Mr. Oliver provided written testimony in support of this bill. Mr. Oliver detailed his experience as a frontline worker. He recounted what it was like going into work while the rest of the world stayed home out of fear. Mr. Oliver believes that workers at service plazas are also risking their lives and deserve hazard pay. He also noted that many employees at these workplaces don't get one paid sick day. He urged for the bill to be passed.

Yesenia Ortiz, Dental Assistant, Department of Corrections:

Ms. Ortiz provided written testimony in support of this bill. Mr. Ortiz detailed his experience as a frontline worker. He noted that most at his workplace employees were expected to show up without receiving the proper personal protective equipment. Ms. Ortiz testified that multiple co-workers contracted COVID-19, which sadly resulted in workers and related family members dying. He urged for the bill to be passed.

Audrey Patterson, Program Aid, Whole Life and Network:

Ms. Patterson submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. Mr. Patterson detailed her experience as a frontline worker. At her workplace, employees were only offered an additional \$2 an hour, which came with restrictions, and this extra pay will expire in the next few months. Ms. Patterson, unfortunately, contracted COVID-19 and had to use her personal time off. She urged for the bill to be passed.

Michelle Proper, Business Services Manager, UConn Health:

Ms. Proper submitted written testimony in support of this bill. She detailed what it is like working in a high-risk environment on a day-to-day basis. She noted that working in that setting causes her great fear and stress. She stressed that frontline workers need to know that they will have access to proper personal protective equipment. Ms. Proper urged for the bill to be passed.

Jeff Reimer, President—Public Safety Council, Council4 AFSCME:

Mr. Reimer submitted testimony in support of this bill. They represent 2,000 municipal officers across Connecticut. They note that their members fit into the bill's definition of "specialized risk workers." He knows officers who have been stricken with COVID-19 and transmitted the virus to family members. Mr. Reimer underscored that more police officers have died from COVID-19 than from all other causes combined. He urged for the bill to be passed.

Cheryl Ressler, Union Representative Stewart-UHP, AFT Local 3837:

Ms. Ressler submitted written testimony in support of this bill. She detailed what a challenging experience this past year has been working as a frontline worker during COVID-19. Ms. Ressler discussed the need for access to personal protective equipment and proper protocols.

Julio Reyes, Young Adult Services Employee, River Valley Services location:

Mr. Reyes provided both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. He detailed how traumatic the last year has been as a frontline worker. Mr. Reyes provided testimony that he contracted COVID-19 and inadvertently transmitted it to his daughter. He noted that healthcare workers account for 25% of those who suffered serious illness due to COVID-19. He urged for the bill to be passed.

Beatriz Sanchez-Lara, Assistant Cook, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Ms. Sanchez-Lara provided written testimony in support of this bill. She specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. Ms. Sanchez-Lara detailed her experience as a frontline worker in her testimony. She recounted how she didn't see her family for months out of concern for their safety. She feels unappreciated because while some essential workers received hazard pay, she did not. She urged the committee to support the bill.

Emil Serrano Sr., Employee, CT Department of Developmental Services:

Mr. Serrano Sr. provided written testimony in support of this bill. He detailed how challenging it has been working as a frontline worker. Mr. Serrano Sr. believes that essential workers deserve to be compensated for the risk that they took. He urged for the bill to be passed.

Courtney Skinner, Teacher's Aide, TEAM Inc.:

Ms. Skinner submitted written testimony in support of this bill. She detailed the challenges of teaching during a pandemic. She highlighted the risks that they take every day to ensure their workplace is clean. Ms. Skinner believes that hazard pay will make teachers feel recognized and appreciated. She urged for the bill to be passed.

Ben Slogesky, Supervising Chef, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Mr. Slogesky submitted written testimony in support of this bill. He specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. Mr. Slogesky described his experience as a frontline worker. He also detailed the emotional impact, including his fear of infecting his wife and three young children. He urged the committee to support the bill.

Janice Stauffer, Registered Nurse:

Ms. Stauffer provided written testimony in support of the bill. She noted that this year was the worst year of her work life in 30 years as a nurse. She highlighted the inadequate staffing levels she experienced at her workplace in support of the bill's staffing transparency

provisions. Ms. Stauffer also expressed her support for hazard pay. She urged for the bill to be passed.

Linda Strickland, Custodian, Rocky Hill Veterans Home:

Ms. Strickland provided written testimony in support of this bill. She noted how stressful it has been working as a frontline worker. She expressed her support for hazard pay because workers risked their lives working in areas where COVID-19 was present.

Rosemary Swanke, Lead Nurse Practitioner, UConn Health:

Ms. Swanke provided both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. She detailed what it was like working as a frontline healthcare employee. She highlighted the need for adequate personal protective equipment in the future so that a lack of PPE does not happen again. She noted the issues her workplace had with staffing levels. She also discussed the personal sacrifices she has had to make over the past year, including; not seeing her new grandson for six months or having contact with her 30-year-old son, who is severely handicapped.

Astrid Tavares, Dental Assistant, Department of Corrections:

Ms. Tavares provided both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. She detailed her experience as a frontline healthcare worker. Although she was an expectant mother, which is considered high risk, she continued to come into work. She also detailed the emotional toll this past year has had, including the fear of infecting their families. She urged for the bill to be passed.

Julio Torres, Food Service Supervisor, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Mr. Torres submitted written testimony in support of this bill. He specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. Mr. Torres described his experience as a frontline worker. He also detailed the emotional impact, including his fear of infecting his children, one of which has underlying medical conditions. He noted the unfairness that some workers are collecting more in unemployment than essential workers have earned working in high-risk environments. He urged the committee to support the bill.

Mary Tracey:

Ms. Tracey submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. She described her experience as a security officer at the Gold Building. Unfortunately, she got laid off two weeks ago. To address the risks taken by frontline workers, Ms. Tracey expressed her support for the essential worker pay and worker support should they become ill.

Teresa Truskowski, Custodian, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Ms. Truskowski submitted written testimony in support of this bill. She specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. Ms. Truskowski detailed her experience as a frontline worker. She addressed how stressful the situation was for her. She feared the possibility of infecting her son, who has a pre-existing health condition. Ms. Truskowski also testified that she became depressed and that self-isolating was hard on her family. She expressed support for the hazard pay and urged the committee to support the bill.

Mark Turczak, President, The Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants:

Mr. Turczak provided written testimony in support of this bill's provisions concerning labor matters related to COVID-19. They noted that physician assistants across the state have

seen firsthand the deadly nature of this virus. They ask that physician assistants be included in future legislation regarding workers' compensation, as PAs are licensed to practice medicine in this state.

David Valentin, Maintainer, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Mr. Valentin provided written testimony in support of this bill. He specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. In his testimony, he described his experience as a frontline worker. He noted how incredibly stressful this last year has been and the emotional toll it has taken. He urged the committee to support the bill.

Justin Ventura, Cook, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Mr. Ventura submitted written testimony in support of this bill. He specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. In his testimony, he described his experience as a frontline worker. He highlighted how stressful the entire episode has been. Mr. Ventura worried about contracting COVID-19 because of his underlying health issues. He also feared accidentally transmitting the infection to his mother. Mr. Ventura urged the committee to support the bill.

Robin Washington Addison, Executive Assistant--UConn Health, Vice President of Community Outreach—AFT Local 3837:

Ms. Washington Addison provided written testimony in support of this bill. She noted that even though she was lucky enough to work at home during the pandemic, she knows many frontline workers who could not. She highlighted the tremendous sacrifices that frontlines workers made, often without adequate personal protective equipment. She testified that her workplace refused to give hazard pay. Ms. Washington Addison urged for the bill to be passed.

Audrey Williams, Food Service Supervisor, Department of Veterans Affairs:

Ms. Williams provided written testimony in support of this bill. She specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. In her testimony, she described her experience as a frontline worker. Ms. Williams noted how stressful the past year has been. Ms. Williams was fearful of contracting COVID-19 because of her previous health issues. She urged the committee to support the bill.

Terrell Williams, Personal Care Attendant:

Mr. Williams provided written testimony in support of this bill. In his testimony, he detailed his experience as a frontline worker. He noted that his pay decreased when he lost two customers due to circumstances out of his control. He stressed that as a PCA, he did not get any hazard pay. Mr. Williams also noted that he does not get paid sick days or access to PPE. He urged for the bill to be passed.

Kellye Woods:

Ms. Woods submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of the bill. She especially wanted to voice support for the hero pay provision. In her testimony, she details what it was like as a frontline worker. Unfortunately, several employees in her workplace, including her, contracted COVID-19 and barely made it out alive. She stated that she was still recovering from the virus. Ms. Woods urged for the bill to be passed.

Darion Young, Forensic Treatment Specialist, Whiting Forensic Hospital:

Mr. Young provided both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. He especially wanted to express his support of the hero pay provisions. In his testimony, he detailed his experience as a frontline healthcare worker. He described the lack of personal protective equipment and the constantly changing policy regarding PPE. Mr. Young also highlighted the inadequate level of staffing that occurred. Unfortunately, he contracted COVID-19 and passed it onto his wife and daughter. Mr. Young had severe health complications and is still recovering. He believes that workers like him deserve hero pay. He urged the passage of the bill.

Peter Zarabozo, Registered Nurse, UConn Health:

Mr. Zarabozo submitted both written and public hearing testimony in support of this bill. In his testimony, he describes his experience as a frontline healthcare worker. He highlighted the lack of personal protective equipment that occurred at his workplace. He notes that this lack of PPE was a clear safety hazard for patients and employees alike. Mr. Zarabozo urged legislators to support this bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

The Associated Sheet Metal & Roofing Contractors of Connecticut:

They provided written testimony in opposition to the bill. They highlighted the bill sections that they have objections to, including sections 3, section 7, and sections 20 through 25. Their testimony details why they believe some of the proposed provisions, such as eligibility for worker's comp, the recall of laid-off employees, and paid sick leave, would impair the construction industry's recovery. Because of the issues cited in their testimony, they suggest exempting the construction industry from the bill's purview altogether.

Joy Avallone, General Counsel, Insurance Association of Connecticut:

Ms. Avallone submitted both written and public hearing testimony in opposition to multiple provisions within the bill. In their testimony, they detail their concerns or reasons for opposition regarding multiple sections of the bill. Those sections are, Section 1, Section 2, Section 3 (b), Section 3 (f), Section 4, Section 5, and Section 6. Should H.B. 6595 advance, they welcome the opportunity to work with the committee to ensure that the bill's language is narrowly tailored and clearly defined.

Kristina Baldwin, Vice President – Northwest Region, American Property Casualty Insurance Association:

Ms. Baldwin provided both written and public hearing testimony in opposition to this bill. In their view, the bill unfairly shifts the cost of the pandemic response to employers and jeopardizes the stability of the workers' compensation system. They also have objections to the presumptions made in the bill, the scope, and economic impact. In their testimony, they outline their serious reservations in detail.

Matthew V. Barrett, President & CEO, Connecticut Association of Health Care Facilities/Connecticut Center for Assistant Living:

Mr. Barrett submitted written testimony in opposition to this bill. They urged the committee to consider the financial consequences of this bill. They note that nursing homes are currently facing unprecedented economic instability due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The industry

needs a sizeable package of financial relief from the state and the federal government without delay. They are concerned that bills like this one will drastically worsen the precarious financial situation they are already experiencing.

John D. Blair, Associate Counsel, Connecticut Business & Industry Association: Mr. Blair submitted written testimony in opposition to this bill. They expressed concern regarding the workers' compensation changes contemplated in multiple bills, including HB 6495. They believe Sections 1-3 in the bill will create new and unnecessary costs that will impact the workers' compensation program's financial viability and directly impact the state's businesses.

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities:

They submitted written testimony in opposition to this bill. They have serious concerns about the bill's drastic changes to the workers' compensation system, which they believe will increase cost, liability, expand coverage of PTSI for certain employee classifications, and impose new unfunded mandates on towns and cities. In their view, establishing a rebuttable presumption for communicable diseases has several harmful consequences. They urged the committee to oppose the bill.

Connecticut Hospital Association:

They submitted written testimony in opposition to the bill as written. They acknowledged that the response of hospital workers to the pandemic has been inspiring. In recognition of their workforce's importance, they noted that hospitals made changes to their healthcare and benefits packages early into the global pandemic. In their testimony, they included a list that highlighted the numerous ways hospitals responded to employee needs. They also stressed that the pandemic has had a significant financial impact on hospitals. They underscored that imposing additional costs on hospitals will further weaken their financial condition and stability. They respectfully suggest that the state looks at federal COVID-19 dollars to fund the policies pursued in this bill.

Connecticut Construction Industries Association:

They submitted written testimony opposing certain sections within this bill. Their testimony detailed why they oppose Section 3, Section 7, and Sections 20-25. They note that the employer-employee relationship, related to the workers' compensation system and the construction industry, has evolved over several years and numerous collective bargaining cycles. Based on this history, they believe that this bill unbalances finely tuned systems and agreements.

Christopher Fryxell, President, Associated Builders and Contractors of Connecticut:

Mr. Fryxell provided written testimony in opposition to the bill. In particular, they have serious concerns about Section 30 of the bill on project labor agreements. They believe that the bill's language erodes the principles of transparency and public input regarding public contracting. Their testimony explains their specific reservations in detail.

Eric Gjede, Vice President of Government Affairs, Connecticut Business & Industry Association:

Mr. Gjede provided written testimony in opposition to this bill. They expressed serious concerns over the bill's following provisions, including Section 1, Section 2, Section 3, Section 7, Section 21, and Section 28. They note that they do support Section 26 of the bill. Their

testimony includes the reasons for their reservations regarding these sections. They urge the committee to oppose the bill.

The Mechanical Contractors Association of Connecticut:

They submitted written testimony in opposition to this bill. Their testimony details their association's reservations toward the bill's following provisions, Section 3, Section 7, and Sections 20 through 25. They stated that because of these provisions, they could not support the bill.

Brian Moran, Government Affairs Director, New England Convenience Store & Energy Marketers Association:

Mr. Moran provided written testimony in opposition to this bill. In his testimony, Mr. Moran highlighted the effort that the industry took to remain open safely. He suggests that this bill appears to abandon their diligent and responsible efforts. He emphasizes that this bill is inconsistent with the message that the Governor and the Department of Public Health conveyed that private socialization, not businesses, drives COVID-19 transmission. He also stresses that the costs associated with the bill will have a significant impact on the industry. They urged the committee not to support this bill.

Mag Morelli, President, LeadingAge Connecticut:

They submitted written testimony in opposition to this bill. They expressed their opposition to how the bill will be administrated and funded. In their testimony, they detail how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the aging services field. While they understand the bill's motivation, they urged the committee not to place the financial burden on the providers. They suggest that the state take on this responsibly by establishing a fitting program of compensation and benefits related to the pandemic, which federal relief money would fund.

Diane Ritucci, President & CEO, Workers Compensation Trust:

Ms. Ritucci provided both written and public hearing testimony in opposition to this bill. They had serious concerns regarding multiple provisions in the bill. Their testimony detailed their opposition to; Section 2, Section 3, Section 3c, Section 3f, Section 4, Section 8, and the paid sick leave provision. They urged the committee to consider the costs of this bill. They noted that the COVID-19 presumption cost increase alone would be 54-378 million dollars annually.

Rory Whelan, Regional Vice President, National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies:

Mr. Whelan provided written testimony in opposition to this bill. They expressed serious concerns over the bill's rebuttable presumption language. They cautioned legislators that the proposed changes to workers' compensation would do more harm than good. They also conveyed their opposition to several other sections of the bill, including; adding additional language about workers' compensation benefits, imposing new requirements on employers and insurers to file a "notice of controversy," and the proposed 400% increase in burial expense benefits.

Reported by: Peter B. Andrews, Assistant Clerk Date: April 12, 2021