

# Labor and Public Employees Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-1002

AN ACT CONCERNING LABOR ISSUES RELATED TO COVID-19, PERSONAL  
**Title:** PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT AND OTHER STAFFING MATTERS.

**Vote Date:** 3/25/2021

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/11/2021

**File No.:** 464

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Labor and Public Employees Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

S.B. 1002 seeks to address employee's needs in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic including personal protective equipment and staffing and other labor issues. The bill also expands eligibility, benefits, and protections for the workers' compensation fund.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

### **KURT WESTBY, COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

Commissioner Westby submitted written testimony, on behalf of the Department of Labor, in support of the bill. The Department of Labor is supportive of certain conceptions with the Department's jurisdiction of the proposed bill to provide relief to Connecticut employees and employers in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Labor stated that they are with the committee to discuss the issues raised within the bills and to help draft language to move the bill forward.

### **KEVIN DILLON, 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.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **KIM ACKERMAN, DIRECT SUPPORT, 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.

### **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.

### **DR. MICHAEL BALDWIN, COUNCILMEMBER, UCHC-AAUP EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Dr. 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 perish.

### **JODY BARR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COUNCIL 4 AFSCME**

Ms. Barr submitted written testimony in support of the bill. She is the Executive Director of Council 4 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Ms. Barr mentioned that more than 25% of members have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. She highlighted her correction employee members' experiences, who, despite working in perhaps the most COVID-19 contaminated and dangerous workplace, showed up and did their jobs. Ms. Barr stressed that AFSCME has members from many different workplaces who have contracted COVID-19 on the job, with some, unfortunately, infecting family members at home. She strongly urged for the bill to be passed.

### **JAMARAH BARNABY-ANDERSON, COOK ASSISTANT, DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS**

Ms. Barnaby submitted written testimony in support of this bill. In particular, her comments focused on Sections 12-14 of the bill. She emphasized her personal experience working in unpredictable and dangerous conditions while having chronic asthma. In Ms. Barnaby-Anderson's testimony, she noted that she ended up testing positive for COVID-19. She urged the committee to consider her testimony when evaluating the importance of hazard pay to employees.

### **JOHN BRADY, 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 WORKING SUPERVISOR**

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. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Briggs' husband lost his job. She stated that this bill would be her road to recovery.

**DESHAWN BROWNELL, SECURITY OFFICER, CONNECTICUT 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 COVID19 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**

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, MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANT, DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES**

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. Mr. Canada contracted COVID-19 and passed it on to his wife, but thankfully not his son, who was undergoing chemotherapy 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.

**CAMERON CHAMPLIN, PLUMBERS AND PIPEFITTERS LOCAL UNION 777**

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

**CANDICE CARLSON, CASEWORKER, DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES**

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. She views the hero pay compensation provision as recognition for the sacrifices and extraordinary everyday work by

frontline employees.

**JOSEPH CHERRY, COOK, DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS**

Mr. Cherry submitted written testimony in support of the bill. Mr. Cherry has been employed at the Department of Veteran Affairs for 33 years. He claimed that every day, when he reported to work, he feared being the next to catch the virus. As a cook, his job requires him to feed the residents and take care of them, as they are dependent on the workers. Mr. Cherry urged the committee to support the bill.

**MELISSA CHIN-HING, PROBATION OFFICER, CONNECTICUT COURT SUPPORT SERVICES OFFICE OF ADULT PROBATION**

Ms. Chin-Hing submitted written testimony in support of the bill. She noted that probation officers have mandatory, face-to-face contact through office visits, warrant service, transports, searches, and mandatory home visits. Ms. Chin-Hing stated that a number of people that were either in her office building or whom she was in close proximity to at the courthouse that she works out of, tested positive. She urged the committee to support this bill.

**CARL CHISEM, PRESIDENT, CONNECTICUT EMPLOYEES UNION INDEPENDENT, SEIU LOCAL 511**

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.

**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, BRIDGEPORT, CT**

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, BRIDGEPORT, CT**

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 infections were put in jeopardy with the many changes in CDC guidelines. Cunningham writes that many of our members and other frontline healthcare workers claimed workers compensation, encountered many obstacles and denial. Proper instruction and education were not given by employers' workers compensation representatives. In fact, many were made to feel they could not have gotten COVID-19 at work. The union was not provided by his employer with a list of our members out sick over 3 days as stated in their Collective Bargaining Agreement. As of right now, Cunningham says that they are still trying to attain all the information so that they can assist their members with proper documentation.

**JORDAN DEANGELO, PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANT, WINSTEAD, CT**

Mr. Deangelo 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.

**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 the bill. Ms. Eldredge notes that being an essential employee during the COVID-19 pandemic has been taxing and stressful. Despite following proper procedures, cases have broken out in the facility she works in, putting both her health and the health of her loved ones at risk. Ms. Eldredge has two teenage boys and has decided to keep them strictly online for school due to the fact that she is nervous about contracting the virus, and subsequently, passing it along to them and to other members of her community. She has worked overtime numerous times, disinfecting the healthcare facility, in order to keep patients and the staff safe. Ms. Eldredge has taken on additional job duties, such as cleaning the rooms of COVID positive patients. She urges the committee to support the bill, which includes hazard pay.

**MANUEL ESTRADA, MAINTENANCE WORKER, STATE CAPITOL 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 coworkers, who had to use a week of his vacation time to recover. Tragically, some family Page 7 of 18 HB-6595 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 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 INC. EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM**

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. Ms. Falzone 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. Ms. Falzone 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 VETERAN AFFAIRS**

Ms. Fonseca submitted written testimony in support of the bill. Ms. Fonseca testified that her job requires close contact with various kinds of people and didn't close during the pandemic. PPE was limited, and she delivered food to residents who were COVID positive. She explained that it has been a terrifying experience for her because of her health risk factors and the risk of spreading the virus to her elderly mother. Ms. Fonseca felt a great deal of anxiety and fear for her life and for the lives of her loved ones. She urged the committee to support the bill.

**NAJHAI GOMES-WALTON, STOREKEEPER ASSISTANT, DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS**

Ms. Gonzalez provided written testimony in support of this bill. She details her experience as a frontline worker at a group home. The group home suffered the loss of a client due to COVID-19, which she described as 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.

**NANCY GONZALEZ, ASSISTANT MANAGER, 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, CONNECTICUT WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND LEGAL FUND**

Ms. Granato provided written testimony in support of this bill. While she supports each section of this bill, she especially supports Sections 20-25. CWEALF has an amendment recommendation to Section 21 2 (b) lines 1117-1127. The recommendation suggests amending this language to make COVID-19 paid sick leave available seven days following this section's effective date. Ms. Granato 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.

**TASHA HALL, ASSISTANT COOK, DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS**

Ms. Hall has submitted written testimony in support of the bill. Hall is a mother of three children, one of which has a respiratory ailment. She is an essential employee that works in direct care. Ms. Hall was worried about potentially contracting COVID-19, dying from the disease, and leaving her children motherless. Despite days where she feared going to work, Ms. Hall continued to report to work because it is her main source of income. Ms. Hall urged the committee to support the bill.

**IVONNE 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, GROUP HOME**

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 VETERAN AFFAIRS**

Mr. Hughes provided written testimony in support of this bill. He explained his experience of working as an essential worker during the pandemic. Mr. Hughes described feeling stressed and 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 VETERAN 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 this bill.

**MELANIE KOLEK, LEGAL COUNSEL, CONNECTICUT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION**

Ms. Kolek submitted testimony in support of the bill. She represents the teachers of the Connecticut Education Association. According to Ms. Kolek, she has spoken with many CEA members who contracted COVID-19 and spread the virus to their family members. She states that only a small number of claims were accepted and deemed compensable by the workers' compensation insurer. Ms. Kolek explained that given the long-lasting effects of the illness caused by the virus, some educators are in need of long-term care. She urges the committee to support this bill.

**GARY LAFONTAINE, DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS**

Mr. LaFontaine submitted written testimony in support of the bill. Mr. LaFontaine was designated to work face to face with COVID-19 positive patients on a daily basis. He wore full PPE to go into the COVID-19 wing to perform custodial work. Mr. LaFontaine cleaned restrooms, emptied the trash, wiped down furniture, and removed hazardous waste. He contracted COVID-19 on November 10, 2020 and was hospitalized for five days. Mr. LaFontaine recovered after an additional ten days. He stated that he is still suffering with side effects due to COVID and urges the committee to support this bill.

**TANYA LEMANSKI, BEHAVIORAL HEALTH UNIT SUPERVISOR, 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 WORKER, 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 VETERAN 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 COVID19 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.

**LATIERA MASSEY, HOME VISITOR AT 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, CONNECTICUT STATE COUNCIL OF THE SERVICE EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION**

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, SBARRO WORKER, DARIEN NORTHBOUND I-95 SERVICE PLAZA**

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.

**ZOFIA MROCZEK, COOK, DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN 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.

**RIGOBERTO NAVA, COOK, DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

Mr. Nava submitted written testimony in support of the bill. He has been employed at the Department of Veteran Affairs for eight years. Mr. Nava expressed concerns about his safety when he went into work in-person during the COVID-19 pandemic. He specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. Mr. Nava urged the committee to support this bill.

**JASON NEGRINI, LEAD MAIL HANDLER, DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS**

Mr. Negrini submitted written testimony in support of the bill. Prior to the pandemic he was considered a non-essential state employee. His designation changed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic when mailroom staff were deemed essential. Mr. Negrini worked 6 days per week delivering mail to all the wings and hospital wards. He also had in-person contact

with Veteran residents who pick up their mail daily. Mr. Negrini expressed concern about putting his spouse and children at risk. He urged the committee to support the bill.

**KATHY NIZIELSKI, CUSTODIAN, DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS**

Ms. Nizielski submitted written testimony in support of the bill because she has witnessed first-hand the stressors of the COVID pandemic. She contracted COVID-19 and was out of work for two weeks. Ms. Nizielski continues to experience lingering side effects from the virus. She writes about being constantly dizzy, tired, having severe body aches and experiencing bouts of depression. Ms. Nizielski worries about contracting the virus again, even despite having been vaccinated. She worries about bringing home the virus again to her loved ones. Nizielski stated that approving hazard pay would help boost morale with all essential employees because it would prove that their hard work and sacrifice are appreciated.

**VINCENT OLIVER, 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 AIDE, WHOLE LIFE**

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.

**KELSEY POSTL, DINING ROOM SUPERVISOR, DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS**

Ms. Postl submitted written testimony in support of the bill because COVID-19 has impacted herself, and her family, directly. Both she and her husband tested positive for COVID. Ms. Postl stated that her grandmother passed away in a nursing home due to COVID-19. She noted that the "Stay Home, Stay Safe" motto does not apply to her or her colleagues because as essential employees they work in-person to feed our veterans. Ms. Postl strongly supports hazard pay because due to the risk of exposure to COVID-19 experienced by essential workers.

**JEFF REIMER, PRESIDENT, PUBLIC SAFETY COUNCIL AT COUNCIL4AFSCME**

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.

**JULIO REYES, YOUNG ADULT SERVICES, RIVER VALLEY SERVICES**

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 VETERAN 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, DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES**

Mr. Serrano submitted written testimony in support of the bill. He referred to his colleagues are true heroes who have placed their own lives, and the lives of their loved ones, at risk to continue providing the necessary services to the people that they serve. Mr. Serrano believes that essential workers deserve to be compensated for the risk that they take.

**CORTNEY 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 VETERAN 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.

**GREGORY SPERLING, CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER, JUDICIAL BRANCH'S COURT SUPPORT SERVICES**

Mr. Sperling submitted written testimony in support of the bill. He agrees that our health care workers, nursing home staff, police officers, parole officers, correctional officers and many other essential employees are deserving of the provisions contained in this bill. Mr. Sperling stated that throughout the pandemic, he and other probation officers have continued to provide warrant and extradition services to the Judicial Branch which requires physical contact. He urges the committee to support the passage of this bill and to also include probation officers as "Specialized Risk Employees" as mentioned in subparagraph (7) of Section 12.

**JANICE STAUFFER, REGISTERED NURSE, DANBURY**

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 6595

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

**LINDA STRICKLAND, CUSTODIAN, ROCKY HILLS VETERANS HOME**

Ms. Strickland submitted written testimony in support of the bill. She said that being an essential employee during the pandemic was stressful. Ms. Strickland noted that having underlying pre-existing medical issues increased her fear of contracting COVID-19. She advocates strongly believes for hazard pay and urges the committee to pass this bill.

**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 VETERAN AFFAIRS**

Mr. Torres submitted written testimony in support of the bill. He notes that he was concerned about the risk of being exposed to COVID-19 at work and possibly infecting his children who have underlying health conditions. Both Mr. Torres and his wife were deemed essential employees. He specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. Mr. Torres urges the committee to pass this bill.

**MARY TRACEY, FORMER SECURITY OFFICER, GOLD BUILDING. HARTFORD, CT**

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.

**DAVID VALENTIN, MAINTAINER, DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS**

Mr. Valentin has submitted written testimony in support of the bill. He explained that working throughout the pandemic as an essential employee has caused him stress, anxiety, and depression. Mr. Valentin specifically expressed support for Sections 12-14. 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.

**AUDREY WILLIAMS, FOOD SERVICE SUPERVISOR, DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN 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, NEW HAVEN, WEST HAVEN, AND HAMDEN, CT**

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, ESSENTIAL WORKER**

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**

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.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

Several speakers submitted testimony in opposition to the bill stating that it would be inaccurate to presume that all workers who contracted COVID-19 was exposed at their place of employment. They oppose the bill's requirements to recall laid-off employees in order of seniority and to guarantee 30 days of work upon call back. They also argued that paid time off is a subject of collective bargaining.

- [Mechanical Contractors Association of CT](#)
- [Associated Sheet Metal & Roofing Contractors of Connecticut](#)

**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.

**CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES**

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities opposes the bill because it contains drastic changes to the worker's compensation system which will increase cost, liability, expand

coverage of PTSI for certain employee classifications, and impose new unfunded mandates on towns and cities.

### **CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION**

The Connecticut Hospital Association 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**

The CT Construction Industries Association 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.

### **KRISTINA BALDWIN, VICE PRESIDENT, 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 BARRETT, CEO, CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF HEALTHCARE FACILITIES / CONNECTICUT CENTER FOR ASSISTED LIVING (CAHCF/CCAL)**

Mr. Barrett submitted written testimony, on behalf of the Connecticut Association of Healthcare Facilities/ Connecticut Center for Assisted Living (CAHCF/CCAL) in opposition to the bill. The CAHCF/CCAL is urging that the financial implications of these various Labor Committee bills on Connecticut nursing homes be carefully considered in the committee deliberations. According to the organization, nursing homes are now facing unprecedented financial instability due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. A very considerable package of financial relief at the state and federal level is urgently needed. The CAHCF/CCAL is concerned that adoption of these various Labor Committee bills will significantly worsen the precarious financial circumstances already being experienced at this time.

### **JOHN D. BLAIR, ASSOCIATE COUNSEL, CONNECTICUT BUSINESS & INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION**

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.

**CHRISTOPHER FRYXELL, PRESIDENT, ASSOCIATED BUILDERS AND CONTRACTORS**

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, CBIA**

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.

**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**

Ms. Morelli submitted written testimony in opposition to this bill. She expressed her opposition to how the bill will be administrated and funded. In Ms. Morelli's testimony, she explains how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the aging services field. While she understands the bill's motivation, Ms. Morelli urged the committee not to place the financial burden on the providers. LeadingAge Connecticut suggests 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 AND 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, NAMIC**

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.

**TRACY WODATCH, PRESIDENT AND CEO, CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR  
HEALTHCARE AT HOME**

Ms. Wodatch submitted written testimony in opposition to the bill. She believes that the bill will impose additional costs on providers and weaken their financial stability.

**Reported by: Jailynn Vidro, Intern  
Peter B. Andrews, Assistant Clerk  
Mike Antonakos, Assistant Clerk**

**Date: 4/30/2021**