

Testimony of

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**House Bill 6381: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE REGARDING THE STATE
WORKFORCE AND RETIRING EMPLOYEES.**

Labor and Public Employees Committee

February 9, 2021

My name is Eileen Ego and I am here today to advocate for passage of House Bill 6381: An Act Establishing A Task Force Regarding The State Workforce and Retiring Employees. I have worked for the CT Department of Transportation (DOT) for 34 years. I currently serve as Assistant District Engineer in District 2 Construction. Throughout my career I have worked hard to represent the Department professionally and to be a responsible steward to the taxpayers of CT. I have received many commendations and promotions along the way. Most recently, in November of 2020, I interviewed for and was offered, the position of District Engineer in the District 2 Office. I would be the first woman to serve in this capacity in the history of the Department.

And yet, I did not accept this position.

District Engineer is the first line of management in my chain of command, and management brings with it a whole host of concerns. Managers do not have the power to collectively bargain. They have gone years without raises. The salary compression between first line managers and their direct reports is extreme.

In my case, although the job comes with significantly more responsibility, it does not come with a raise. Indeed, I would be taking home LESS money as a District Engineer than I currently do. The reason the position is vacant in the first place is because the former District Engineer left State service to work in private industry. In his new role, he has far less responsibility and makes 50% more than he did with the Department!

So the District Engineer position in District 2 remains unfilled. Why should you care about this? If you look at page 23 of the DOT's 5-year Capital plan, you will see \$927 million dollars worth of construction commitments for the years 2021-2025. That represents work across all 5 districts. However, District 2's allotment is fully \$500 million. Over half of these Capital plan commitments will be administered without a manager in place.

In addition, the District Engineer is the liaison to the contracting community, utility companies, municipalities and even the legislature. A vacancy in this position will be felt far beyond the limits of the District Office.

And it's not just DOT. Between now and July of 2022, in some locations as many as 40% of all state employees are eligible to retire. Many of these are Managers. With the current compensation plans, it will be nearly impossible to fill those vacancies.

And there are even more concerns.

Managers across all agencies have historically participated in the Performance Assessment and Recognition System (PARS). They are expected to identify 3-4 initiatives each year that they will work on to improve production, efficiency, reliability, customer service or some other metric. Theoretically, how well they achieve those results is tied to how much of a raise they get the following year. I say theoretically because since 2007, there have only been 2 years that a PARS increase was actually given.

So how hard do you think Managers are working to achieve efficiency, reliability and good customer service? How hard would you work with only 2 performance raises in 14 years? To their credit, State Managers continue to be dedicated and are still working really hard. They care about doing a good job and despite the lack of appreciation they frequently feel, they still strive to do their best each day. But this is a matter of equity and fairness. It is high time they were recognized and rewarded for their contributions.

HB 6381 is the first step toward addressing these issues, by examining succession planning and the barriers to managerial recruitment. I strongly urge you to support it!

Thank you for your attention.

Respectfully Submitted,

Eileen Ego, P.E.