

**Testimony of
Monika Nugent
President Managerial and Exempt Employees United/AFTCT**

**Labor and Public Employees Committee
February 9, 2021**

**Testimony in Favor of HB 6381 An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study the
State Workforce and Retiring Employees**

Good afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, Senator Sampson, Representative Arora and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Monika Nugent and I am the president of Managerial and Exempt Employees United, an affiliate of AFT Connecticut.

I am here to speak in support of House Bill 6381 that requires this committee to establish a task force to look at the retirement cliff that the state is facing just next year, the barriers to recruitment into state managerial and exempt positions, and to provide recommendations to remedy this situation.

The imminent retirement benefit cliff has resulted in an urgent situation for the state workforce across all agencies and job classes. However, almost 80% of the managerial workforce is able to retire in 2022. (2012, DAS State Employee Workforce Study attached)

Over the past 15 years, managers have not had merit raises or cost of living adjustments at the same rate as bargaining unit employees. This has led to compression, and in some situations complete inversion, of managers salaries and the employees they supervise. Outside of one 3.5% COLA increase in July 2019, managers have not received any increase in wages for six years but have had increases in deductions for SERS, health insurance coverage, and most recently the paid FMLA deduction. This has led to managers bringing home less money today than they did in 2015.

In addition to issues regarding salary, managers do not get the same opportunities for training and for further professional development. Over the past ten years, manager training programs have been stripped from the Department of Administrative Services and any in service training classes or programs have not been offered to managers due to budget reasons. This has led to managers coming into a position with no training or onboarding. With droves of managers leaving the workforce, and with them taking years of institutional knowledge, this will be a major hurdle for new managers who will have to fill these positions without any training.

These are just two issues that are creating a barrier to recruiting and retaining new managers and exempt employees. Anecdotally, across agencies, we hear all the time

of managers downgrading their positions because they will make more money for their families. We are hearing of positions being left vacant or filled with unqualified hires because internal staff, who would be able to do the job well, are not willing to become a manager due to the above reasons.

M+E and AFT CT believe that conducting a study of the issues facing managerial and exempt employees and the barriers to recruitment into the managerial and exempt work class needs be conducted and without it the state stands to be in an extremely vulnerable position. This study and subsequent report will provide insight and a roadmap for action to ensure that vital state services related to public safety, health and human services, and other general government functions continue uninterrupted and at the same level of service to the residents of the state.

Thank you for your time and attention. I will be happy to answers any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

Monika L. Nugent

President

Managerial and Exempt Employees United, AFT Connecticut

Enclosed:

M+E Description

DAS 2012 State Employee Workforce Study

Managerial and Exempt Employees United: Who We Are

Managerial and Exempt Employees (M+E) is a growing group of managerial and exempt employees that are uniting for a collective voice to bring to light the concerns and inequities that managers and exempt employees face in the workplace.

M+E is fighting for the equitable treatment and benefits that our collective bargaining counterparts receive. Some of the issues we would like to see changed:

1. Adequate and equal merit and Cost of Living (COLA) increases as the rest of the state workforce.
2. Reduction in insurance coverage payments so that they are in line with other state employees. Managers are NOT more expensive to cover.
3. Increased training and education for managers. Currently there are NO programs for ongoing professional development for managers and no onboarding training.
4. Ability to telework AFTER the public emergency orders from the COVID pandemic are lifted.
5. Adjust the manager's pay plan so that there is more flexibility in step increases and wages from the onset of hiring.