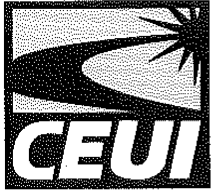


SEIU Local 511



CONNECTICUT EMPLOYEES UNION INDEPENDENT

PO Box 1268
Middletown, CT 06457

March 11, 2021

Labor and Public Employees Committee

Testimony by Carl Chisem, President

Municipal Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 506

Connecticut Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 511

In Support of S.B. 1002 AN ACT CONCERNING LABOR ISSUES RELATED TO COVID-19, PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT AND OTHER STAFFING MATTERS

In Support of H.B. 6478 AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION

In Support of H.B. 6595 AN ACT CONCERNING LABOR MATTERS RELATED TO COVID-19, PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT AND OTHER STAFFING ISSUES

Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, my name is Carl Chisem and I am President of the Connecticut Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 511 and the Municipal Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 506. At the state level, we represent over 3,600 blue collar maintenance and service State workers who provide valuable services within our state facilities. They cook, clean, repair, maintain and deliver in Connecticut's State buildings, hospitals, college campuses, airports, roads, bridges, and parks. At the municipal level, we represent over 1,000 workers who are paraprofessionals, administrative assistants, cafeteria workers, custodians, and maintainers. I submit this testimony in support of S.B. 1002, H.B. 6478 and H.B. 6595

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us all to recognize the factual definition of an "essential worker." For too long, these, now deemed essential workers, have been treated unfairly and with tremendous disrespect. What they are paid, the duties they are expected to perform and the struggles they endure must not be ignored any longer. Support of these three bills is a necessary first step in rectifying the unequal and disparate treatment they endure and will go a long way in restoring the dignity they deserve.

Establishing a workers' compensation presumption for essential workers who have worked on the front lines throughout this public health crisis that prevents employers from firing or disciplining employees for filing workers' compensation claims and prevents employers from deliberately dissuading an employee from filing a claim is necessary. Allowing employees to bring civil action against employers who violate these provisions is necessary. Expanding permanent partial disability workers' compensation benefits for workers is necessary. Raising the workers' compensation burial benefit retroactively for essential workers who died due to COVID-19 is necessary.

Establishing recall rights to workers who were laid off during the pandemic, requiring PPE stockpile distribution and inventory mandates, paying essential workers hazard pay for their continued dedication and service throughout the pandemic, establishing paid sick days definitions to discourage use and prohibit retaliatory actions by employers and requiring data reports for hospitals and nursing homes are all necessary measures to ensure that we support these workers now and in the future.

SEIU Local 511, AFL-CIO, CLC

www.ceui.org • 860-344-0311 phone • 860-344-8648 fax



Supporting these bills and working hard to ensure they are put into statute is the least we can do for each and every one of these workers who have put their and their families' health at risk for so long. Furthermore, once this pandemic is over, we must not forget that their jobs are still as essential and important as we move forward. All workers deserve dignity, respect and fairness, no matter the job title. I hope we have all learned at least that from this painful period in our lives.

I strongly urge the committee to support S.B. 1002, H.B. 6478 and H.B. 6595. Please don't let these people down.

Thank you.