



**Testimony of  
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SB 1002 AAC Labor Issues Related to COVID-19, Personal Protective  
Equipment and other Staffing Matters  
HB 6595 AAC Labor Matters Related to COVID-19, Personal Protective  
Equipment and other Staffing Matters

**Joint Committee on Labor and Public Employees  
March 11, 2021**

Good evening Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Ivonne Hamm. I am a registered nurse and worked in the psych field for over thirty years. I am also First Vice President of University Health Professionals, AFT Local 3837 and a Vice President of AFT CT. I am here today to urge you to pass H.B. No. 6595 because our frontline Healthcare worker need it now.

As a mental health professional, I have taken care of people with a myriad of issues that impact their psychological health. Once I left bedside nursing to become a full-time Officer of UHP almost 5 years ago I thought psychiatry was now a part of my past. This pandemic proved me to be so wrong.

This past year has been difficult for many people but no more than those frontline healthcare workers taking care of the sickest of the sick. As the Union Vice President, I have been fielding calls from members who are suffering, fearful, anxious overwhelmed and feeling unappreciated. Some are worried about their families. They have shared their fears and anxiety about catching COVID, bringing it home to their spouse, their children, or their elderly parents. I have sat through countless numbers of phone calls with frontline healthcare workers crying, sharing thoughts of ending their careers, and some even sharing suicidal thoughts/feelings.

The single Mom who is still struggling with who will take care of my family if I get sick and die, how am I going to school my kids, get enough rest to go back again tomorrow for my 4<sup>th</sup> 12-hour shift in a row, and provide safe quality care to their patients? Or the Nurse who asked me how many more people do I have to watch die alone? All the while they are praying for adequate PPE and some care and compassion from their employer.

Did they get that? No. They got we are in a pandemic we need you to work one more extra shift a week, do not call out, oh and even though many of the area hospital gave out bonus' to their employees for

working through the peak of the pandemic, let us not only NOT give bonus' let us also offer no wage increases for the next 3 years. And while we are at it lets propose taking away other contractual benefits that have been negotiated in previous Contract Bargaining Agreements. Do not call us heroes and treat us like zeros. Have a plan for daycare if we need you to stay at work longer, it does not matter that your daycare closed, and you have no family able or willing to help and take the risk of being exposed or catching COVID.

Essential employees have been on the frontlines putting their own health and their family's health at a higher risk for the past 12 months and counting, they need workers comp for when/if they get covid, or when they are suffering from PTSD due to their continued trauma of what they are experiencing every day. The unknown is the scariest for everyone, we know people have been traumatized by this pandemic. We know what can cause trauma and I have seen evidence and arguments that this pandemic has a high potential to contribute/cause PTSD.

We need to take care of the nurse who is having a drink or 2 after a terrible night at work (just so she can turn her mind off), or so she can fall asleep and do it all over again the next day. We want that nurse to know that the State of Ct. has her back, that she has the support of her elected officials. That all the care, compassion and time spent caring for patients during this Pandemic is noticed and if there are lasting effects such as PTSD they will receive the care they may need.

Our UCH Heroes have stepped up to the plate during this pandemic, day after day after day for the past year. The long-lasting effects of trauma are well documented. Therefore, we need this bill. There is no doubt in my mind that once all is said and done there will be healthcare workers/essential employees that will have long term mental health issues related to this pandemic. We will see signs and symptoms of PTSD in our healthcare work force who took care of you and your loved ones when you needed it the most, I think it is well over do that the State of CT. take care of our "Heroes" when needed in the future.

They need workers comp for when they get covid, or when they are suffering PTSD from their continued trauma of what they are experiencing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, these scenario's I have shared are not abstract but actual people's experiences that have been shared with me.

Ivonne Hamm

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