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Testimony of Brian Moran

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Connecticut General Assembly
Joint Committee on Labor and Public Employees

SB 1002, An Act Concerning Labor Issues Related To COVID-19, Personal Protective Equipment and Other Staffing Matters, and

HB 6595, An Act Concerning Labor Matters Related To COVID-19, Personal Protective Equipment and Other Staffing Issues.

Co-Chair Kushner, Co-Chair Porter, and Members of the Committee:

The New England Convenience Store & Energy Marketers Association (NECSEMA) represents convenience store and gasoline retailers, independent transportation fuel distributors, and the businesses which supply them. According to the National Association of Convenience Stores, Connecticut is home to almost 1,700 convenience stores employing over 25,000 people.

NECSEMA offers the following testimony opposing SB 1002 and HB 6595.

At the inception of the pandemic, convenience stores and gas stations were deemed by federal and state authorities as essential services. Many of our members chose to remain open so they could continue to serve their communities and neighborhoods during the state of emergency. Just like they have always done. As an industry we rose to the challenge by monitoring the daily influx of safety protocols issued by federal and state health officials, scrambled to purchase personal protective equipment, trained our employees, purchased hand sanitizer, monitored capacity and distancing, frequently disinfected surfaces and touchpoints, and constructed shields at the point of sale. These efforts were not inexpensive; however, they were unquestionably necessary to protect our employees and customers.

Against that backdrop, this bill appears to abandon our diligent and responsible efforts. Most importantly its necessity is inconsistent with state contact tracing metrics, and weekly communications to the public by Governor Lamont and the Department of Public Health where they acknowledge the high rates of COVID-19 transmission are being driven not by businesses, but by private socialization.

It is likely we can all agree that businesses or individuals, choosing not to comply with required health and safety requirements should be held accountable; however, making all businesses culpable just because they offer essential services is not appropriate. If passed, insurers will have no choice but to raise premiums and pass this added cost onto employers. The timing for these added costs could not come at a worse time, as many businesses are struggling to remain open and keep people employed. Adequate protections already exist outside of the Workers Compensation program for parties to seek claims for disability and quarantine, and there is no necessity for this bill, nor abandoning the current causation standard, because doing so abandons the science of transmission as evidenced by Connecticut health experts.

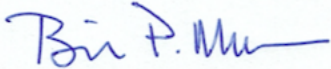
During the pandemic, many employers both large and small provided their workers with bonuses, temporary wage increases, gift cards, paid time off while in quarantine or sickness, all to acknowledge their loyalty and

sacrifice. For any organization to attract and retain reliable and quality employees, these actions were not only necessary during the circumstances posed by the pandemic, but are for many employers, a fundamental part of their ongoing business model. For the state to dictate these business models, especially while excluding state and municipal employers, is inappropriate and may even hinder or limit the generous responses many employees received.

We believe that the business community will continue to do our part protecting our employees and customers, and now we ask the legislature to listen to our concerns with this bill. **We urge the Committee to not support SB 1002 and HB 6595.**

NECSEMA appreciates the opportunity to provide our comments for the Committee's consideration.

Respectfully,



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