

Labor and Public Employees Committee  
March 11, 2021 Public Hearing

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

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

Senator Julie Kushner, Representative Robyn Porter, and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, my name is Kelsey Postl. I am a resident of Simsbury and a member of CEUI, Local 511. I work at the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs and I am a Dining Room Supervisor. I supervise the Health Care facility Diet Kitchen within the State of CT Veteran's Home and Hospital. I monitor the daily operations of the Health Care facility food service Diet Kitchen and tray line. Our area provides three meals per day-365 days a year to our veteran residents. I supervise a range of job classes within my department to include assistant cooks and food service supervisors. I am also responsible for addressing questions or concerns from residents regarding their special diets and meal tickets. I often collaborate with our diet technician to resolve our resident's food and nutrition concerns.

I am involved in operational meetings with our department management team. I am regularly required to move around the hospital facility: Food Service Director's office in the Residential Facility, various housing units according to facility regulations.

I am submitting testimony in Support of S.B. 1002 An Act Concerning Labor Issues Related to COVID-19, Personal Protective Equipment and Other Staffing Matters and H.B. 6595 An Act Concerning Labor Matters Related to COVID-19, Personal Protective Equipment and Other Staffing Matters. I would Specifically like to focus on Sections 12-14 of both bills.

Covid-19 impacted myself and my family directly. My husband and I went to get tested because we started having respiratory symptoms, we both tested positive. I felt incredibly worried that I could have spread the virus to other staff or residents of the facility before I knew I was positive for Covid-19.

At the exact time I tested positive my grandmother was in a nursing home and unfortunately contracted Covid-19, she passed away due to the serious illness it caused. Covid-19 has had profound impact on my family.

PPE has been implemented to protect staff and residents but they only work if everyone, including the residents, are following the proper procedures. Due to the close contact living conditions of a nursing home, illness can spread rapidly to staff and residents alike. In the Health Care Facility we have daily interactions with residents either walking down the hall or speaking to them about their meals. The HCC has been locked down since March which means that these residents are not able to have any visitors including

family; as expected the residents are frustrated and lonely. They are looking for people to talk to and are tired of all the restrictions they are under. About a month ago I was in a hallway when I came across a resident yelling at a nurse. She was trying to get him back on the unit because he was refusing to wear a mask. He became very upset and was yelling and swearing at her. Unfortunately because he refused to wear a mask or go back to his room security had to intervene. This is only one example of the constant exposure to serious Covid-19 related illness directly related to daily interactions with our residents.

Since Covid-19 first started facility and food service policies and procedures are constantly changing. There have been residents and staff members in the health care center that have tested positive and units are constantly on and off precautions due to positive tests or contact tracing. Because not everyone gets symptoms or sometimes symptoms don't present until after you can spread the virus it is very stressful to work around others. You never know if someone you have come in contact with has Covid-19. Even though there are strict PPE regulations residents continue to walk around without keeping their masks on and refuse to social distance despite the insistence of staff. We are essential employees so we are required to work even though there is a chance we can be exposed to Covid-19. The motto Stay Home, Stay Safe, does not apply to us, we need to be at work to feed our veterans even if that means we are putting ourselves in a situation where we are exposed to the serious illness effects of Covid-19.

As essential employees we are expected to come in to work under any and all conditions. I believe that we are working in a hazardous environment. Going into work during the COVID-19 pandemic has not only been hazardous to our health but also to our mental health. The amount of stress COVID-19 has put on us is unlike anything we have faced before. We deserve hazard pay because we show up and do our jobs even when it is harmful to our health and to the health of our families.

I urge the committee to support both S.B. 1002 and H.B. 6595.

Thank you,

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