



March 11, 2021

Good morning, Chairman Porter, Chairman Kushner and Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. We are Jeff Reimer, President of the Council 4 AFSCME Public Safety Council and Derek Puorro, Legislative Chairman of the Council 4 Public Safety Council. Jeff is a sergeant with the East Windsor Police Department. Derek is a sergeant with the Middletown Police Department. We represent 2,000 municipal police officers spread across Connecticut.

Our union strongly supports Senate Bill 1002, AN ACT CONCERNING LABOR ISSUES RELATED TO COVID-19, PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT AND OTHER STAFFING MATTERS, House Bill 6595, AN ACT CONCERNING LABOR MATTERS RELATED TO COVID-19 and House Bill 6478, AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION.

Our members fit the definition of “specialized risk” workers in section 14 of Senate Bill 1002, and similarly in HB 6595. Police officers have had to enter dwellings and structures on a regular basis. Our members do not know if these structures are Covid infected or not.

Officers have had to assist people or subdue people who have been later found to have Covid. Officers have done wellness checks only to find out that the citizen in question was sickened or killed by Covid. Our members are exposed in all of these circumstances. We both know officers who have been gravely sickened by Covid. We know officers who have accidentally infected family member after finding out that they were infected through an on-the-job Covid exposure.

More police officers died from Covid in 2020 than from all other causes combined. The ten dollar an hour payment in these bills is a recognition and some recompense for the unusual wear and tear that our officers have had to sustain over this more than a year of exposure to a deadly pandemic.

We support other specialized risk workers such as correction employees, juvenile detention and court employees, hospital workers and nursing home workers. We

also support essential worker pay for food services workers, motor vehicle department workers and others.

House Bill 6478 protects workers from employers who foot-drag or try to avoid their responsibility in assisting workers whose exposure was almost assuredly from on the job Covid exposure. It is undeniable that specialized risk and essential workers have suffered higher Covid infection rates than other workers.

All of us have shown up and done our duty during this pandemic. We urge you to do your duty and pass these bills that help us and our families. Thank you for your consideration. Please let us know if you need further information.