

**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 Benjamin Slogesky. I am a resident of South Windsor and a member of CEUI. I work at the Department of Veterans' Affairs and I am employed as a Supervising Chef.

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.

As a chef, my work places me in a very fortunate position. I am able to cook for, and interact with, Veterans who have served our country. My contact and care for them takes me to two unique settings here on campus. I am responsible for preparing meals for the patients in our skilled nursing facility and veterans in congregated independent living dormitories. Part of what allows us to provide satisfying meals to our veterans is our dedication to the close personal contact and relationships we have with them. This level of direct patient care is something that has remained steadfast during the pandemic, despite the inherent risk of providing this intimate type of care.

As Covid progressed, I quickly found myself a risk manager as much as I was a chef. Following changing protocols, carefully managing my stresses and that of others, and just trying to survive a pandemic while serving the best food possible quickly became my daily goals. Day to day was about as far as I wanted to think in this static landscape of not knowing what was next. As Covid ravaged nursing homes, food production facilities and other businesses, I could not help but wonder if I was doing enough to protect myself, my family, and my staff from getting infected.

For the first 6 months of the pandemic, I entered and exited my home through a basement door, and even slept in my basement out of fear that my wife or 3 young children would end up infected with the virus that I brought home with me. This constant level of apprehension and worry over “doing the right thing” that burdens me is something not all of us have had to bear over the past year. I have had to personally come to terms with the fact that people around me could die if I mismanaged my own safety and exposure.

Emotions have come in many forms at this time of the pandemic. I feel lucky, fortunate, and confident of my ability to survive and lead my family and staff through this life-changing event. There is much sorrow and sadness for those we know who we have lost. But the persisting theme that resonates with me is hope. Hope for the future, hope for normalcy in the world around us.

We have been through a lot. Not as much as some, but much more than most. It is my hope that you can understand the willingness to sacrifice we all continue to have in our professions and be exposed to that which most would not want to endure. We do it with a sense of pride and service and we did it when the people we serve needed us most.

As I was tasked to answer the challenges of Covid, I ask you to answer the question of what is fair to frontline worker hazard pay with courage and compassion.

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

Thank you.

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