



**Testimony of
Gregory Sperling, Chief Probation Officer II
The Union of Professional Judicial Employees, AFT Local Number 4200B**

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

Labor and Public Employees Committee

March 11, 2021

Good morning/afternoon/evening Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Gregory Sperling and I have been a probation officer with the Judicial Branch's Court Support Services for 24 years. I am here to testify in favor of **SB 1002 An Act Concerning Labor Issues Related to COVID-19, Personal Protective Equipment, and other Staffing Matters.**

I am appearing today to provide testimony directly related to Section 12 of this bill and more specifically to subparagraph (7) Specialized Risk Employees.

I think that we would all agree that our health care workers, nursing home staff, police officers, parole officers, correctional officers and many other essential employees are deserving of the provisions contained in SB 1002. The nature of their work did not allow for them to take a step away from their duties when the COVID Pandemic hit.

I am testifying to bring to light the role and responsibilities of many probation officers during the Pandemic.

During this period, myself and other probation officers throughout the state continued to provide warrant and extradition services to the Judicial Branch.

When arresting someone with a violation of probation warrant, there is no ability to social distance. It involves physical contact while applying handcuffs and searching the client once in custody. During the processing portion of the arrest, probation

officers are required to fingerprint client again involving close contact. The individuals are then transported to a Court or Department of Corrections facility.

When performing extraditions of clients from other states probation officers either drive or use commercial airlines to accomplish this task. When driving the probation officers and client are in a vehicle together for several hours. Very often the weather does not allow for the vehicle's windows to be open during travel, which has been recommended during COVID.

When flying, probation officers are confined to the airplane they are flying in. We travel to states throughout the country regardless of the COVID infection rate those states. Once we take custody of a client in another state we are connected to that client until we turn them over to a CT Department of Corrections Facility. There is no ability to social distance due to the fact that positive control needs to be maintained at all times. We sit directly next to a client on the plane, accompany and monitor them when using the rest room, assist them with eating a meal in addition to other tasks requiring direct and prolonged contact.

Flying extraditions vary in length but are usually between 12 and 18 hours long. The majority of the time we are having direct contact with the client that it is in out custody.

The Probation Officers that overlooked the risks and performed these tasks during COVID, demonstrated an unwavering commitment to their professions and are deserving of additional compensation

I urge you to support the passage of SB 1002 and to also include probation officers as "Specialized Risk Employees" as mentioned in subparagraph (7) of Section 12.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

