

Labor and Public Employees Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-315

AN ACT CONCERNING UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS FOR ADJUNCT HIGHER
Title: EDUCATION FACULTY.

Vote Date: 3/22/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/8/2022

File No.: 265

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor and Public Employees Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

S.B. 315 will require the Labor Department to consider specific circumstances when determining whether an individual who performs instructional, research, or principal administrative duties at an institution of higher education is eligible to receive unemployment compensation. This will ensure that adjunct employees in higher education positions receive financial compensation to keep themselves afloat during periods of unemployment. This bill will also require that institutions of higher education submit the necessary information for their employees to receive financial compensation during customary vacation periods and holidays. This bill outlines the instances in which employees will be entitled to retroactive unemployment compensation, so if employers do not follow through by filing the necessary documentation, they are adequately compensated for their loss. Ultimately, this bill will provide legal protection for adjunct employees who cannot afford to comfortably live without receiving compensation for their unemployment.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Connecticut Department of Labor, Commissioner, Dante Bartolomeo; opposes the bill because there is problematic language given that is not in conformity with federal law. Additionally, each claim that the DOL processes is determined on a case-by-case basis, and CTDOL's new system does not have the capacity to process a list, nor would the list constitute employer participation as required by the act.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

The following individuals support this bill, citing specific ways in which this legislation would have helped them or their coworkers during times of financial instability due to unemployment. They support this bill because it attempts to fix an inequitable historic injustice that singles out educational employees, making it nearly impossible for adjuncts to collect their deserved unemployment compensation during periods when they are not being compensated:

Director of Union Organization of CT State University, American Association of University

Professors, Paul Filson,

President of CT AFL-CIO, Ed Hawthorne,

Adjunct Faculty, MCC, Kathleen Smits,

Lecturer of the Department of Psychological Science at Central Connecticut State University,

Kevin J. Kean,

Faculty Member and Former Dept. Chair at Capitol Community College, Jeffery Partridge,

Professor at Capitol Community College, Merilee Roussat,

Faculty at University of Hartford, Ira Rubenzahl,

Provost at Fairfield University, Christine Siegal,

Adjunct Faculty at Tunxis Community College, Jessica Somers,

Professor of History, Elle Van Dermark,

Professor at Congress of CT Community Colleges, Seth Freeman,

President of CSEA SEIU Local 2001, Travis Woodward,

SEIU Member, Stacey Zimmerman

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

University of Connecticut, Chief Human Resources Officer, Christopher Delello, opposes the bill because of concerns about cost and implantation issues, including the designation of whether there is reasonable assurance of them returning to teach in the following semester. There are additional questions regarding Dual Employment/Dual Coursework that are not addressed by the bill. The University's unemployment claims are self-insured, and the impact would be anticipated to be costly if the bill passes. There is additional concern that to achieve the level of activity to file unemployment benefits, it would create the need to hire several additional human resource positions to handle the additional workload.

Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges, President, Jennifer Widness, opposes this bill because the nature of adjunct faculty is that their positions are part-time and temporary; it is not intended to be a permanent position. The majority of adjuncts are in households where adjunct earnings are not the primary source of household income. Institutions of higher education often cannot make a commitment in April to the DOL what it's fall course schedule will look like.

Reported by: Molly Lukiwsky

Date: 3/29/2022