

Labor and Public Employees Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-320

AN ACT CONCERNING RAISING THE THRESHOLD FOR UNEMPLOYMENT

Title: OVERPAYMENTS.

Vote Date: 3/22/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/8/2022

File No.: 267

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor and Public Employees Committee
Rep. Robyn A. Porter, 94th Dist.
Rep. Anne M. Hughes, 135th Dist.
Rep. Michael A. Winkler, 56th Dist.
Rep. Corey P. Paris, 145th Dist.
Rep. Anthony L. Nolan, 39th Dist.
Rep. Brian T. Smith, 48th Dist.
Rep. Charlie L. Stallworth, 126th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Workers cashing unemployment checks past the first day of a new job and before their first paychecks were being charged with a felony rather than a misdemeanor.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None submitted.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

CT. AFL-CIO, President, Ed Hawthorne: supports the bill because many workers are not aware their unemployment checks cover a time period (or partial time period) that includes the start date of a new job. Often these workers do not receive their first pay checks until several weeks after their start date, but if they receive any benefits after that, they must return these payments back to the state. The average amount of overpayment is \$800. Raising the threshold for felonies in fraudulent overpayment cases from \$500 to \$2,000 would protect low-wage workers during that interim period from being charged with a felony. This bill will

help individuals remain employed, support their families, and move forward without being labeled a felon if they accept payments after their start date.

Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Legislative/Policy Advocate, Sara Parker McKernan: supports the bill because it could be a month before workers actually get their first paychecks. During that time, the worker is without income. Their unemployment compensation check may seem like a logical way to bridge that income gap. However, workers who continue their UC checks, mistakenly or not, can be charged with a felony for accepting overpayment. Raising the threshold from \$500 to \$2,000 could mean the difference between being charged with a felony vs. a misdemeanor. It would mean more individuals will remain employed and support their families without being labeled a felon.

SEIU, Representative, Stacey Zimmerman: supports all agenda items.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Self, David Godbout: opposes the bill because it is a violation of his Fourth Amendment Rights.

Reported by: Marie Knudsen

Date: March 29, 2022