

# Labor and Public Employees Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-6721

AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS COMPENSATION AND PORTAL-TO-

**Title:** PORTAL COVERAGE FOR TELECOMMUNICATORS.

**Vote Date:** 2/28/2023

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 2/23/2023

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor and Public Employees Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

The purpose of this bill is to support and protect emergency dispatchers by providing them with portal-to-portal workers' compensation coverage for injuries sustained when travelling to and from work, which is not currently covered by workers' compensation.

The substitute language provides portal-to-portal coverage to dispatchers whenever they are travelling directly between home and work, thus putting them in the same category as police and firefighters, rather than limiting it to the narrower circumstances that Department of Corrections employees fall under.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

No response was provided from the administration or relevant agency.

### NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

**Kyle Champney, Emergency Telecommunicator, Fairfield County Regional Dispatch:**

Supports this bill because currently in Connecticut, emergency telecommunicators do not have portal-to-portal coverage, meaning if he were to be involved in a traffic accident or some other incident causing injury to himself, he would not be covered under Connecticut law. This bill would change that.

**Ed Hawthorne, President, Connecticut AFL-CIO:** Supports this bill because without its' passage, telecommunicators will continue to be forced to dip into their own pockets to take

time off and seek treatment. Or worse, they will not get the care they need for PTSI, potentially putting themselves, their co-workers, their families and those they serve in danger.

**Lang Mussen, Lieutenant, Bristol Police Department:** Supports this bill because dispatchers frequently provide lifesaving instructions to callers, find key details from calls and ensure that the police and fire personnel sent to the calls do so safely. Comments that it is only right that they be afforded the same portal-to-portal coverage that police and fire receive.

**Joshua Wrinn, Dispatch Supervisor, Norwalk Combined Dispatch:** Supports this bill because dispatchers are required to come to work during natural disasters and storms, and that it is only right and fair to provide telecommunicators with coverage, so they are protected coming to and from work.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Brooke Foley, General Counsel, Insurance Association of Connecticut:** Opposes this bill because the Workers' Compensation Act was never intended to cover injuries that occur during a normal commute to and from work, because such activity falls squarely outside the employees' employment activities. Also comments that an emergency call exception already exists which provides workers' comp coverage for injuries sustained driving to or from work in response to an emergency upon request of their employer.

**Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns:** Opposes this bill because it will increase workers' compensation costs for many municipalities. Also comments that workers' compensation is not intended to cover employees while they are commuting to and from work.

**Zachary McKeown, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities:** Has concerns with this bill because, while they appreciate the important role that dispatchers play in protecting the public safety, they fear the effects of this bill would generate an increase of claims unrelated to their work. Comments that this will cause workers' compensation costs to significantly increase and threaten the affordability of workers' compensation insurance for municipalities.

**APCIA:** Opposes this bill because it would require workers' compensation coverage for certain injuries sustained by telecommunicators which were not sustained in the course of employment. Comments that this bill essentially overturns, for telecommunicators, the "coming and going" doctrine for determining whether an injury took place in the course of employment.

**Rory Whelan, Regional Vice President, NAMIC:** Opposes this bill because it would result in a significant increase of claims unrelated to work to be considered as compensable. This will cause workers' compensation costs to significantly increase and threaten the affordability of workers' compensation insurance.

**Reported by: Gabriel Marques, Assistant Clerk      Date: 3/2/23**