

Labor and Public Employees Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5271

AN ACT INCREASING THE UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION THRESHOLD

Title: FOR AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS.

Vote Date: 3/21/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/27/2024

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor and Public Employees Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The reason for this bill is to update the threshold for when agricultural employers would be subject to paying unemployment. At present, the unemployment threshold for agricultural workers is \$20,000, this bill would raise it to \$25,000. Updating this metric to reflect inflation would better support small agricultural businesses.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Danté Bartolomeo, Commissioner, Department of Labor: testified in opposition to this bill, on the grounds that it could cause fewer employers to be covered by existing UI law. She stated that Connecticut's agricultural economy is thriving, and that this is not an effective way to support the state's agricultural employers and employees. She stated a decrease in the number of individuals who will receive UI is a negative impact on the state's economy.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Kathleen McCarty, State Representative, 38th District: testified in support of this bill, and stated that many agricultural employers are unable to keep up with the cost of living and inflation present in the state. She further requested that the threshold be raised to \$40,000 instead of \$25,000, in order to better protect agricultural employers.

Rob Schacht, owner, Hunts Brook Farm: testified in support of this bill, and stated that while a \$20,000 threshold was acceptable when the minimum wage was lower, that threshold

is now easily crossed by an employee earning minimum wage, and should be updated. He stated that the lower threshold presents an undue burden on small farms.

Susan Pronovost, Executive Director, CT Greenhouse Growers Assoc.: offered testimony in support of this bill, and stated that it would significantly support smaller, family-owned farms.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None provided.

Reported by: Cameron Clarke

Date: 04/08/2024