

# Labor and Public Employees Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-332

AN ACT CONCERNING PORTAL TO PORTAL COVERAGE FOR PUBLIC

**Title:** WORKS DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES.

**Vote Date:** 3/19/2024

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/5/2024

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor and Public Employees Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

The reason for this bill is to provide portal-to-portal coverage to Department of Public Works employees who are responding to emergency situations. This type of coverage ensures that if the workers are injured while reporting from their homes to an emergency, they will be covered under Worker's Compensation for any injuries suffered.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None provided

### NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

**Ed Hawthorne, President, CT AFL-CIO:** testified in support of this bill, and stated that all workers should receive this form of benefit, and that this – along with other efforts to expand coverage of workers' compensation – is helping to remedy past restrictions on workers' compensation.

**Zak Leavy, Legislative Director, AFSCME Council 4:** offered testimony in support of this bill, and stated that public works employees are often called in during emergencies when other workers can stay home, similar to emergency dispatchers. He stated that these workers should be covered if something happens to them while responding during emergency situations.

**Jeff Woodward, Vice-President, AFSCME Council 4 Local 2212:** submitted testimony in support of this bill and stated that public works employees often are called in during dangerous circumstances when others are not so ordered. He described that there had been circumstances of public works employees getting into accidents when forced to report in these conditions and shared his hope that this bill would encourage municipalities to call in public works employees earlier before roads become hazardous.

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

**Kristina Baldwin, Vice President, APCIA:** testified in opposition to this bill, and stated that the no-fault coverage provided by workers' compensation should not extend to workers traveling to and from work, as any injuries suffered during this time have not occurred during the normal course of employment. She stated this expansion would overturn the bedrock principle of "coming and going" within the workers' compensation system.

**Brooke Foley, Counsel, Insurance Association of CT:** submitted testimony in opposition to this bill, on the grounds that this bill would entitle workers to receive workers' compensation for injuries outside of the normal course of employment. She stated that this expansion would compromise the integrity of the workers' compensation system and increase costs across the board for employers.

**Betsy Gara, Executive Director, COST:** offered testimony in opposition to this bill, and described it as an unfunded mandate on municipalities, which would place a burden on towns and taxpayers. She stated that workers' compensation is generally not intended to cover injuries sustained outside of normal employment.

**Zachary McKeown, Advocacy Manager, CCM:** testified in opposition to this bill, and stated that it would cause a significant increase in claims unrelated to the work of public works employees. He stated that while "portal-to-portal" benefits may be applied to firefighters and police officers, as they often respond directly to emergencies, that requirement does not apply to public works employees.

**Reported by: Cameron Clarke**

**Date: 04/03/2024**