

# **Labor and Public Employees Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT**

**Bill No.:** HB-6408

AN ACT EXPANDING COMPENSATION TO DEPENDENTS FOR A DEATH

**Title:** RESULTING FROM AN ACCIDENT.

**Vote Date:** 3/13/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 2/27/2025

**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 & Public Employees Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

The reason for this bill is to provide benefits to the family members of an employee who dies from a work-related accident. At present, these benefits are limited to spouses and children of the worker as presumptive dependents; the case of Andrew DiDomenico, a 26-year-old DOT employee who was killed by a driver proved the importance of this issue, as his next of kin did not receive the benefits that a spouse or dependent child would have. These benefits are intended to – for a limited period of time – support and sustain a family who has just lost a family member and associated income.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

### **Connecticut Department of Transportation, Commissioner, Garrett Eucalitto:**

Commissioner Eucalitto expressed his support for this bill on behalf of the Connecticut Department of Transportation. He explained the situation of Andrew DiDomenico, a 26-year-old CTDOT worker who passed away while working in Wallingford, and that because Andrew did not have a dependent spouse or child, his family did not receive compensation. In order to support the families of Andrew and other CTDOT workers who have not had the opportunity to build families of their own, Mr. Eucalitto requested that the bill support this bill. Commissioner Eucalitto expressed his support for this bill on behalf of the Connecticut Department of Transportation. He explained the situation of Andrew DiDomenico, a 26-year-old CTDOT worker who passed away while working in Wallingford, and that because Andrew did not have a dependent spouse or child, his family did not receive compensation. In order to support the families of Andrew and other CTDOT workers who have not had the

opportunity to build families of their own, Commissioner Eucalitto requested that the bill support this bill.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Ed Hawthorne, President, Connecticut AFL-CIO:** Mr. Hawthorne expressed his support for this bill, explaining that currently, the dependents of an employee receive a one-time payment to assist with burial expenses and a weekly payment based on the average weekly earnings of the deceased. He noted that by expanding the burial compensation benefit to certain non-spouse, non-child family members, this bill would ensure that the families of workers without spouses and children would still receive that financial assistance when burying the deceased family member.

**Carl Chisem, President, Connecticut Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 511:** Mr. Chisem expressed his support for this bill, especially following the passing of Andrew DiDomenico on the job while working with the Department of Transportation. He explained that this would allow the families of young workers like Andrew to still recover money after dying, regardless of their life circumstances and whether they had married and started families.

**Travis Woodward, President, CSEA, SEIU Local 2001:** Mr. Woodward expressed his support for this bill, explaining the deaths of Andrew DiDomenico and Aaron Pelletier while on duty. He noted that this bill would allow the family members of workers who die from an on-the-job accident to receive workers' compensation death benefits even if those family members are not the children or spouse so the deceased workers; for workers like Andrew who did not get the chance to have a spouse or children, this would ensure that the post-death benefits would still benefit their families.

**Ally Sexton, Treasurer, Administrative and Residual Employees Union:** Ms. Sexton expressed her support for this bill, noting that in her twenty-year tenure at the Connecticut Department of Transportation, three workers have died in the line of duty. She explained that because he has no children or spouse, the life of Andrew DiDomenico – a 26-year-old CTDOT worker who passed away in 2024 – is not valued by current workers' compensation law.

**Connecticut Department of Transportation Employees:** Three workers with the Connecticut Department of Transportation expressed their support for this bill, stressing how dangerous their work is. Testimony was provided by:

- **Carmen Bazzano**
- **Ryan Martel**
- **Brandon Wilson**

**Central CT Citizens:** Various citizens of central Connecticut urged the committee to support this bill and expressed their support for employees who put their lives on the line every day.

**Deborah Masella:** Ms. Masella requested that the committee support this bill, expressing her opinion that the current worker's compensation law only allowing a dependent child or spouse to receive compensation for a loss is discriminatory and unfair. She stressed that whether or not a deceased worker is married or has children, their life is of no less value.

**Additional Testimony:** 107 individuals expressed their general support for this bill and for the family of Andrew DiDomenico. Testimony was provided by:

- |                         |                         |   |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Arianna Avanzo       | 38. Carrie Korwnkiewicz | 75. David Stegos  |
| 2. Richard Barbierri    | 39. David Lake          | 76. Kerry Roberts   |
| 3. Karl Battick         | 40. Eric Lebaron        | 77. Kayla Roque   |
| 4. Terry Battista       | 41. Melissa Lombardi    | 78. Concerned Residents<br>of CT  |
| 5. Henry Beecher        | 42. April Lunn          | 79. Jennifer Rich   |
| 6. Karen Bernetti       | 43. Scott MacDonald     | 80. James Rinaldi   |
| 7. Jessica Black        | 44. Tyler Mach          | 81. Carlos Rios   |
| 8. Sally Bowman         | 45. Amy Manware         | 82. Danielle Rios   |
| 9. Ruth Burchard        | 46. Michael Massimino   | 83. Robin Rios  |
| 10. Robbin Cabelus      | 47. Eoin McClure        | 84. Paul Rizzo  |
| 11. Heather Chirumbolo  | 48. Kim Mierzejewski    | 85. Ro Rodriguez  |
| 12. Juan Claudio        | 49. Lou Miller          | 86. Sylvia Russ   |
| 13. Erin O'Connell      | 50. Maureen Miller      | 87. Irmgard Sauntinez   |
| 14. Salvatore Cosentino | 51. Carrie Miranda      | 88. Pamela Savejis  |
| 15. Donna Cossette      | 52. Heather Miranda     | 89. Jamie Schiopucie  |
| 16. Susan Culotta       | 53. Bradley Moore       | 90. Joseph Seaman   |
| 17. Karen Dash          | 54. Christine Moore     | 91. Ryan Segedi   |
| 18. Alicia DiDominizio  | 55. Tracey Mudry        | 92. Jennifer Sheehan  |
| 19. Kathryn Divaney     | 56. Brook Murratti      | 93. Tom Sienkowski  |
| 20. Ryan Divaney        | 57. Erik Olson          | 94. Katherine Smith   |
| 21. Susan Divaney       | 58. Jim Olson           | 95. Jay Smolenski   |
| 22. Derek Ezovski       | 59. Lars Olson          | 96. Laura Squillante  |
| 23. Cameron Fahey       | 60. Lisa Olson          | 97. Maureen Strillacci  |
| 24. Diane Fahey         | 61. Anthony Papallo     | 98. Henry Suzio, Vice<br>President, L.<br>Suzio York Hill<br>Companies Inc. |
| 25. Lisa Fahey          | 62. Mary Beth Papallo   | 99. Blair Sylvia  |
| 26. Seanna Fahey        | 63. Joseph Petraccion   | 100. Syan Sylvia  |
| 27. John Farkash        | 64. Stacey Porter       | 101. Richard Tabor  |
| 28. Lori Farkash        | 65. Dina Prendergast    | 102. Abigayil VanDeusen   |
| 29. Jennifer Gaffey     | 66. Matthew Randazzo    | 103. Alyssa Vasquez   |
| 30. Phillip Giglio      | 67. Cheryl Reilly       | 104. Kristina Viger   |
| 31. Barbara Grignano    | 68. Julian Vermund      | 105. Alexa Warren   |
| 32. Donna Gudelski      | 69. Nanette Hammond     | 106. Joseph Warren  |
| 33. J. Hope             | 70. Lisa Cyr            | 107. Sandra White   |
| 34. Jennifer Hunt       | 71. Alan Raymond        |   |
| 35. Christine Kamenoff  | 72. William Gaviria II  |   |
| 36. William Kamenoff    | 73. Cheryl Beedle       |   |
| 37. Thomas Knowlton     | 74. Christian Soto Jr.  |   |

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

**Zachary McKeown, Advocacy Manager, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities:** Mr. McKeown sympathized with the intent of this bill but expressed his concerns with the language. He pointed to the lack of a detailed fiscal analysis on expanding benefits would affect the workers' compensation system, the vague language regarding family members, the

lack of limits on benefits and compensation, and the unclear justification for expanding the benefits as reasons not to support the bill.

**Pete Myers, Senior Public Policy Associate, Connecticut Business and Industry Association:** Mr. Myers explained that while he respects the intent behind this bill, he opposes it given that it would expand workers' compensation death benefits beyond their intended scope. He pointed out that this bill would increase the financial and administrative burdens on employers and that life insurance is a more appropriate tool to administer post-death benefits.

Three individuals provided matching opposition to this bill, noting that the workers' compensation program is supposed to ensure medical treatment and wage replacement for injured workers. They objected to the idea that workers' compensation should be expanded to non-dependent family members and pointed out that there are multiple other options for post-passing family compensation. This testimony was provided by:

- Kristina Baldwin, Vice President, American Property and Casualty Insurance Association**
- Brooke Foley, General Counsel, Insurance Association of Connecticut**
- Christopher Nikolopoulos, Senior Regional Vice President, National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies**

**Reported by: Sam Sims**

**Date: 3/26/2025**