

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

**Bill No.:** HB-6904

AN ACT CONCERNING UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS FOR STRIKING

**Title:** WORKERS.

**Vote Date:** 3/6/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 2/13/2025

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Labor & Public Employees Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

The reason for this bill is to ensure that workers on strike for more than two weeks consistently are able to receive unemployment benefits. Workers on strike are not presently eligible for unemployment, and this can lead to prolonged financial hardships while exercising their constitutionally protected right to strike.

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

None provided.

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

**Travis Woodward, President CSEA SEIU Local 2001:** Supports the bill. States Connecticut law favors employers during a labor dispute, Workers who strike are unable to access unemployment benefits because they are presumed to have left their jobs voluntarily. But if they are locked out by the employer, they can receive these safety net benefits. It would incentivize an employer to remain at the table to avert a strike, if they don't, they risk their UI taxes going up. We should follow New York and New Jersey's example. A strike is a last resort option. It is never entered into lightly, and it is something that every worker wants to avoid. What workers want is better pay, better benefits, and to be treated with dignity and respect on the job. This bill not only ensures that strikes remain a last resort option, but also that they are rare and short. Also stating that strikes in CT over the past 4 years have lasted an average of 3 days.

**Daniel Perez, Economic Policy Institute:** Supports the bill. States that EPI modeling of publicly available UI and strike data, suggests that the bill would result in minimal costs to the state of Connecticut, just 0.04% of the state's total UI expenditures. Applying a more generous assumption—that 100% of all eligible strikers would apply for and receive benefits, the impact to the state trust fund would still amount to just one tenth of 1% of statewide UI expenditures (0.1%). Further, the data from Labor Action Tracker show no increase in strike durations or frequency in New Jersey since the state reduced the eligibility waiting period for striking workers to collect unemployment insurance from 30 to 14 days. States UI plays a crucial role as a macroeconomic stimulator, generating approximately \$1.90 in economic activity for every \$1 spent. This reform would ensure that critical dollars continue to flow into local businesses and communities during strikes, while allowing workers to exercise their labor rights without fear of losing their livelihoods.

**Irene Tung PhD, Senior Researcher and Policy Analyst National Employment Law**

**Project:** Supports the bill. States they have been studying the warehouse worker injury crisis around the country for 5 years and has been working with lawmakers across the country to address this issue. States warehouses are the fastest growing industry in Connecticut and that the jobs are amongst the most dangerous in the state. "warehousing and storage" and "couriers and messengers" are 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in rates of injury that require missed work or job transfer with injuries much more common than in construction, manufacturing, and transportation. Following OSHA data Amazon and FedEx warehouses have the highest rate of injury, with Amazon being 43% of the industry in the state and having the lion's share of injuries. Amazon is a pioneer in the high-tech workplace surveillance practices and recent research from the University of Illinois has shown that the high rates of injury at Amazon are directly attributable to the way that the company manages its workforce. In 2024, a U.S. Senate investigation uncovered evidence that the company knows that its quotas and management practices are the reason workers are so frequently injured. Amazon even developed internal proposals to lower its injury rates. But the company ultimately chose not to implement them, which is why it is so important for lawmakers to establish external safeguards like the ones proposed in these bills. I'd like highlight one urgent amendment needed to the bill. The language on attorney fees is out of line with how Connecticut law currently treats low-paid workers and could jeopardize any enforcement if this bill becomes law. NELP would suggest changing the language to align with Connecticut's minimum wage law, which allow workers to recover attorney's fees if they prevail in a case, but don't require them to pay their employer's attorney fees if they don't. The point of allowing prevailing plaintiffs to recover attorney fees is so they can find competent counsel to take their case when it's not likely to be a big money maker for the attorney.

**Caroline Tanbee Smith, Alder Ward 9 New Haven:** Supports the bill. States the bill is a practical, impactful, and low-cost step toward protecting worker's rights. Highlights findings from Economic Policy Institute, Connecticut would join New Jersey and New York and 13 other states are considering similar policies, providing UI to striking workers would cost less than 1% of UI budget, the bill would be stabilizing for communities and families during strikes.

**Joe Durette, Quality Inspector at Pratt & Whitney, IAM Local 1746:** Supports the bill. States they are a Quality Inspector at Pratt & Whitney in East Hartford, and a member and Health and Safety Representative of Machinists Local 1746. States this is the third straight year they have spoken before this committee regarding UI for Striking Workers. Speaks about the impact the threat of a strike had their family as child up, and on members dealing

with serious medical conditions at the time. States they joined dozens of fellow union brothers and sisters in engaging legislators across the state to stand up for working families in the face of corporate bullies for UI benefits for strikers. States disappointment of the Governor's lack of support and Veto. States he has seen lawmakers give tax breaks to corporations in appeasement and given concessions to the company only to see plants shuttered and workers laid off. Speaks about union support for endorsed candidates, with candidates clearly benefitting from the support. Stating that now 33 elected members are union members. States they are calling on the committee, and the state legislature, to deliver for us. This bill will help unions and workers stand up for themselves and get a better workplace.

**Ed Hawthorne, President Connecticut AFL-CIO:** Supports the bill. States the union represents 250,000 workers across Connecticut. Mentions the 20 workers on strike at i-Health, that unionized in March of 2024. The company refused to bargain in good faith for months and committed unfair labor practices, the workers voted to strike and two days later some were fired without just cause. These events are a reminder of how laws are stacked against the workers in our state. By addressing health and safety concerns and of warehouse workers and allowing strikers to access UI the committee demonstrates this it is in touch with the needs of workers in the state. States the Executive pay has risen much faster than worker pay, and workers face economic hardship to advocate for themselves. Voting to strike is the hardest experiences workers can go through, facing the loss of their job and benefits, but sometimes there is no other option. This bill will not have a serious negative effect on the UI Trust fund. States that there are almost 2 million workers in warehouses today and that their injury rate is twice that of other private sector jobs. States Amazon and other employers use algorithms to track workers and force a quota based on unsafe working conditions that push speed and do not permit workers to comply with safety guidelines. This bill will work to make warehouses safer.

**Gabriela Rivera, LPN Autumn Lake Healthcare at Buck Hills:** Supports the bill. Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) at nursing home facility. States many employees work long hours, overtime shifts and sometimes additional jobs to make ends meet. At the start of their career, they made \$24 an hour. During the COVID-19 pandemic, that became \$50 an hour but it is now \$30, and they are struggling. States a contract renewal is coming and they do not want to go on strike, but we are prepared to. caregivers like me are overworked and underpaid, negatively impacting personal well-being, mental health, and quality of care. However, going on strike is a difficult decision to make, stating they live paycheck to paycheck and that is why they need additional protections for striking workers. Nobody wants to go on strike, we do it because we have no other choice.

**Timothy Gabriele, UNITE-HERE Local 34, Chair of North Haven DTC:** Supports the bill. States bill would not equalize the balance of power between workers and employers, but it will allow the Connecticut working class to tilt the scales slightly back in their favor, allowing a strike without the fear of losing everything. States workers are struggling right now There are many ways to tackle this issue, but the best way is to organize a union. The point of a union is to have a seat at the bargaining table, not to strike but sometimes management refuses to bargain in Good faith. States their union hasn't struck in over 20 years. Strikes rarely last more than 14 days, but when they do, they are forced by the employers to get strikers to concede and turn against each other and reject the entire idea of organizing. This is the current administration has made stripping workers of their right to organize a priority. We need our leaders to have workers' backs. Unions organize to help their members, but they

benefit the entire community by increasing the standard of living. States Bills like this help make Connecticut more affordable and accessible to everyone.

**Vincent Mauro Jr., Chair of the New Haven DTC:** Supports the bill. States good union jobs have always been a path to the middle class for New Haven residents. States there has never been a more important time for the Democratic party to stand with working people. Unionized workers and their families have better access to healthcare, a living wage, and important rights on their jobs, this stability is vital in a fluctuating economy. States they also help historically marginalized groups improve their lives and work against policies like redlining. Unions allow more residents to buy homes, to send their children to college, to save for retirement, and to participate in our state's economy. Last year, workers at the Omni New Haven Hotel at Yale went on strike for four days and were joined by many elected officials, including Governor Ned Lamont. Omni workers won up to 14.5% raises in the first year, but workers do not want to strike. The goal is always to use peaceful negotiation and problem solving. There is no reason that hotels owned by billionaires should not provide middle-class jobs. Unionized workers and employers in New Haven have shown how this is possible.

**Linnea Moore, Residential Program Worker Oak Hill:** Supports the bill. States they are a Residential Program Worker for Oak Hill a group home that cares for residents with a variety of disabilities. States employer has started bringing in temporary staff to provide direct care. Who do not know how to care for our individuals, as well as not being able to do several tasks, from documentation to medication dispersion, or driving residents, leaving full time employees to pick up the extra work but with no extra compensation. Many of my co-workers work two or three jobs just to make ends meet. Fortunately for me, I am a union member. My co-workers and I have a voice in our workplace and the ability to negotiate for higher wages and better working conditions. Going on strike means risking your financial stability. Having the option to briefly collect unemployment while standing up for our rights as workers will give all of us a sense of security.

**Joseph Malcarne, Business Manager at IBEW Local 420:** Supports the bill. States the bill adds fairness to the negotiations process by allowing UI benefits for strikers and incentives employers to remain at the table and avert a strike. No union leaders recommend a strike lightly, workers stand to lose everything, but sometimes a strike is the only option. The state has been trying to hold Eversource accountable, this bill would make it easier for the workers to do that. Northeast utilities stopped the defined pension for future employees and the union didn't strike over it. To this day new employees ask why they were sold out. This bill would make it easier to consider strike but will not encourage them as UI benefits are meant for 50% of wages for no more than 26 weeks. Unionized workplaces raise the standard for all workers, helping them work for all workers will strengthen the economy. It's time for Connecticut to follow New York and New Jersey's example.

**Natasha Kuranko, Connecticut Citizen Action Group:** Supports the bill. Strikes are often celebrated in culture but what is left out is the financial devastation. Strikes are difficult decisions and come only after months or even years of stalled negotiations unsafe conditions and bad faith tactics from employers, it's not bargaining it's economic coercion. This bill doesn't encourage strikes, it encourages fair negotiations. States Economic Policy Institute showed that Striking workers would be 0.04% of total UI claims, since 2021 only 5 strikes in the state have lasted longer than 2 weeks, and that striking workers would have benefits for 90% shorter period than average UI claim. Workers strike for a better life not to collect 50% of

wages after two weeks. Organized labor is one of the only hopes of restoring economic balance in this country. This bill will help restore balance.

**Daniel Livingston, Livingston, Adler, Pulda, Meiklejohn, & Kelly:** Supports the bill. States personal history of being from a union family and how strikes are hard for everyone and how strikes and unions built the middleclass. Strikes are often about more than just wages but about having jobs at all. States case law and explains statues about history of Federal UI benefits. When workers strike, they stand to lose everything, and workers rarely gain anything in the short term, long strikes are necessary for long term gain. Our current law favors employers because it pressures workers to end the strike. No worker chooses to go on strike lightly and do so for serious reasons. It is well within the State's long history of respect for collective bargaining. This bill is not anti-business it helps strike a better balance between employer and employee and leads to a more dedicated workforce.

**Richard L. McCombs, President/Business Manager IBEW LU 261:** Supports the bill. States he is employed at Electric Boat and is a union leader, and that the middle class is feeling the pain, and that the government is not on their side, this bill will help with that. Also states that he has been involved in 3 long term strikes and one wildcat strike in his 58 years of employment. These strikes had bad personal life ramifications for members, including foreclosures, divorces, and debt that led to loss of security clearances, some even considering suicide out of guilt. Since then, strikes have not needed to happen and are a last resort. Current laws favor employers and strikes have impacts on the entire community not just those on strike. When workers go on strike it is for serious issues, and workers have good cause, this is what UI exists for.

**Madeline Pitre, Students Unite Now:** Supports the bill. States their academic performance has been strongly dependent on the teaching fellows that are responsible for large parts of the education process. These graduate students hold invaluable positions and make learning at such a high level more tenable. States that it is good that Local 33 won a good contract without needed to strike, and this bill will ensure that that can continue to be how contracts are settled and will help advance science in the state.

**Sal Punzo, New Haven Board of Alders: Supports** the bill. The New Haven Board of Alders is committed to supporting good jobs for New Haven residents, and we know that a good job is a union job. This bill will incentivize employers to settle good contracts without waiting workers out and will improve job protections for union members and all workers. States that during his career he was involved in 4 strikes, and that during each of those everyone was afraid, but they had to strike to improve working conditions. States the strikes worked and the quality of life and education improved, but the strikes shouldn't have had to happen. This bill will encourage employers to stay at the table, and avert a strike.

**Norah Laughter, Students Unite Now, and New Haven DTC:** Supports the bill. Started at Yale in 2022 with Local 33's successful union drive with the campus maintained by 8,000 union employees. The entire community benefits from good jobs, and good jobs are unions jobs. Unionized workers make on average 20% higher wages than non-unionized workers; for Black workers, women, and Hispanic workers, this difference rises to 20%, 23%, and 35%, respectively. I've gone on canvases about local elections, affordable housing, and union jobs in the city—the common denominator in the conversations I have is that good union jobs make *everyone* more secure. The Omni New Haven Hotel Strike won 14.5% wage

increase and led the way for workers across New Haven. We need more union jobs in New Haven, and we need workers to be protected when they exercise their right to strike, we ask that you continue to demonstrate this sense of solidarity by passing this bill.

**Tenzin Jorden, Students Unite Now, and New Haven DTC:** Supports the bill. States they immigrated to the US in 2009 with their parents, who held odd jobs and made minimum wage. In 2011 their father began organizing his workplace's housekeeping staff into UNITE HERE Local 6. This took a few years, and the workers faced a lot of hardship and pushback but in the end they won. Their contract came with better pay, fair grievance process, comprehensive healthcare, pensions, and dignity. They didn't have to strike to win the is but the potential was always there. This Bill would help immensely in the labor process ensuring workers have their basic needs met when exercising their right to strike. Last year many Politicians came to the picket line, they should support this bill.

**Ian Skoggard, Member New Haven Rising:** Supports the bill. Recently retired employee of Yale, former Deacon and now a lay leader. Lived in New Haven for over 30 years and has seen the tremendous change the unionized labor has brought to the city. Unions have helped to alleviate poverty in the city and bring hope to families. More needs to be done and organizing efforts are under attack. Allowing striking workers to draw UI ensures they can afford to exercise their right to strike.

**Scott Marks, Director New Haven Rising:** Supports the bill. States Connecticut is one of the most unequal states with 40% of households facing poverty in 2022. States unions raise wages for all workers and the decline of unions is the cause of inequality. Successful strikes last year brought workers a raise in wages and decrease in healthcare costs. What workers win in a strike isn't up to the committee but supporting workers by passing this bill you can protect workers.

**Jewell McKiver, Member New Haven Rising:** Supports the bill. States cost of living is going up everywhere, but wages are not. Currently works at a small firm with pay enough to get by but health benefits and living costs take up most of the pay. Been trying to get a better job to get better health benefits to go to the doctors more. Just finished paying off an emergency room bill from 5 years ago. Was proud to stand in solidarity with the Omni New Haven Hotel strikers, who were striking for the good of all workers, unions raise the standard for what employers should pay. Workers should not have to strike for a reasonable wages and employers should not be able to starve out workers, this bill will help workers exercise their right to strike.

**Elizabeth Ritter, Former Representative, current DTC and State Central member:** Supports the bill. The Democratic party has a long history of supporting workers and their unions because unions set standards for wages, benefits, and workplace protections for all of us. Unions get better productivity, stable workforces, allows workers to buy homes, send kids to college, save for retirement, and contribute to Connecticut's economic growth. This bill will help keep the governor's 2025 state of the state address promise, it will provide ladders to success and will restore balance to the bargaining process to help grow the middle class, and will encourage employers to bargain in good faith.

**Taylor Bartoski:** Supports the bill. States a need for the bill because of continued overreach of companies, and that many workers do not have a say in their organization. States she was

hired under false pretenses and that organizing and threatening a strike was the only way to improve the condition of the workplace. This bill would help to protect workers from being taken advantage of.

**Leslie Blatteau President, New Haven Federation of Teachers:** Supports the bill. States that the fundamental premise of labor is solidarity, and that while their union cannot strike the believe this bill is needed. When workers strike, they risk everything but are sometimes forced into it by large and powerful employers who make unreasonable demands to force a strike to "starve them out". Employers take advantage of the economic instability to force workers to subvert the negotiation process. This would only allow benefits after two weeks of striking and then only 50% of their wage.

**Heather Brauth, delegate and the treasurer of AFT CT 5149:** Supports the bill. States No one makes the decision to strike lightly and workers risk loss of income permanent loss of jobs. By the time a strike vote is taken, workers feel that a strike may be the only option to resolve differences with their employer. Stated she was part of the Backus nurse strike. Unemployment only gives up to 50% of wages for 26 weeks, so it's not an incentive to strike. It's time for Connecticut to follow New Jersey and New York. This will allow workers to receive what could be lifesaving funds to support themselves and their families during times of struggle and strife. We are asking that you recognize that big business in the state of Connecticut have superfluous funds allowing them to wait out their workers instead of working with them.

**Ally Sexton, Member of the Administrative & Residual Employees Union:** Supports the bill. As a public employee, I do not have the right to strike so neither of these bills would benefit me. I support these bills because I believe that giving striking workers access to unemployment benefits will encourage their employers to remain at the negotiations table and bargain in good faith, and possibly even avoid a strike. Striking is always a last resort for workers but is it the last resort for employers? these bills will hopefully encourage employers to bargain fairly with their workers to avoid a strike. If they do not, then after two weeks, the workers will be eligible to seek unemployment. These bills are good for working families, but also good for the communities where they live, because when strikes take money out of the pockets of the workers they also take revenue out of the businesses in those communities. I urge you to support these bills and give striking workers access to unemployment compensation.

**Jose Anaya, former Stop and Shop Employee:** Supports the bill. Was involved in the 2019 Stop & Shop strike. Only wage earner in the home but walked out because the union said it was the only choice. Proud to strike but it took a year to recover from 11 days of no wages. Because striking workers cannot access unemployment insurance, employers use the threat of evictions or missed payments to suppress wages and working conditions. Current law encourages employers to use families' financial distress as a bargaining strategy.

**Jeanette Morrison, member of AFSCME Council 4, New Haven Board of Alders:** Supports the bill. States a history of trying to unionize a workplace as a teenager. Father was a union postal worker that was able to provide for the family, as well as having time to spend with the family, and retire with dignity. Too many families do not have access to that, and too many companies resist workers' efforts to improve their economic and family conditions. We

need more union jobs in communities, and we need workers to be protected when they exercise their right to strike.

**Sara Parker McKernan, Policy Advocate for CT Legal Services:** Supports the bill. States they provide legal services who earn 125% or less of the federal poverty level, and that they are often struggling to provide for their families even though they do essential jobs for the economy. This bill will help to protect workers' rights. CT is an employment at-will state leaving our workers vulnerable to unfair employer actions, as they can't afford to lose their jobs or to strike. Allowing striking workers to access UI benefits will allow workers the lifeline to exercise their rights to improve their conditions.

**Lori Pelletier Division Vice President, Public Relations American Income/National Income Life:** Supports the Bill. For decades, we have proudly partnered with labor unions, their members and their families to provide them with no-cost benefits, including a waiver of premium for policyholders in the event they go out on strike, are locked out, or laid off. When workers are forced to make the decision to go out on strike, it is not a decision made lightly. Striking means a potential loss of employment, which equates to loss of income and elimination of healthcare and retirement benefits. This is your opportunity to level the playing field that has historically been tilted against workers, their families, and their communities. Supporting this bill stands on the side of fairness for workers and will incentivize an employer to remain at the table and negotiate in good faith to help avert a strike. On behalf of our 11,000 employees and associates, and our CEO Steve Greer, I urge you to support the bill and demonstrate to the workers of Connecticut that their elected legislative representatives are listening and will provide them with a reasonable safety net.

**Jody Barr, Executive Director of AFSCME Council 4:** Supports the bill. Workers do not make the choice to go on strike lightly and only do so after management has ceased to negotiate in good faith to ensure a fair contract is the result. States the bill would provide stability for workers who are forced to strike. Providing unemployment insurance would be a critical tool to allow workers a way to support themselves and their families until the dispute is resolved. Currently, if workers are locked out, they have access to unemployment benefits. this is the same type of labor dispute where management has decided to force workers to take drastic action. We believe it is a matter of fairness to provide unemployment benefits to striking workers after a two-week period.

**Cheryl Bergman, member of YURA:** Supports the bill. States they were founding member of UNITE HERE Local 34, in 1982 and involved in the 10-week strike of 1984. States that some workers did not join in the strike, because They were too frightened to be without a paycheck. Questions that with this bill would the strike have even happened, or would more workers have felt able to join the strike making it shorter, or would Yale have been inclined to bargain fairly since they would be paying for the unemployment insurance? UI should be made available to striking workers, therefore leveling the playing field for labor to compete with management in disputes, instead of allowing employers to have the ability to starve their workers into submission.

**Danielle Berriault, RN, Vice President of our local, AFTCT 5149:** Supports the bill, through collective bargaining members gain better contracts but also for better safety standards for the community. Workers do not desire to go on strike as we can be faced with



the risk of a loss of income and even the permanent loss of our jobs. States that bill would level the playing field by allowing striking workers to receive unemployment benefits after two consecutive weeks and states this would not incentivize workers to go on strike by any means but instead would motivate employers to negotiate in good faith.

**Sarah Ganong, State Director Working Families Power:** Supports the bill. States that every worker in Connecticut deserves to be treated with respect. States that CEOs currently make 290 times the pay of an average employee, and that for years workers' rights have suffered a steady erosion. This bill would give workers an opportunity to assert their rights. Strikes are not undertaken lightly and only done when every other avenue is exhausted. Passing this law would correct the inaccurate presumption that strikers voluntarily leave their jobs. This bill would incentivize employers to negotiate in good faith.

**Kirby Boyce, legislative committee member of IAMAW Local 1746:** Supports the bill. States Bill would incentivize an employer to negotiate in good faith to avert a strike stating they'd risk increasing their unemployment insurance experience ratings if strikes last longer than two weeks. States No one makes the decision to strike lightly, and that strikes improve the workplace for all. Stated that the last strike they were involved in resulted in job security language in contracts but also meant cancelling Christmas plans for the family due to loss of wages. States unemployment is only 50% of wages for 26 weeks, so it is not a lucrative reason to strike. New York and New Jersey do this, Connecticut should follow.

**John Brady, Executive Vice President AFT Connecticut:** Supports the bill. States The decision to go on strike is never easy for worker usually comes after months or years of intense negotiations and buildup. healthcare workers, it is increasingly the only way they can advocate for safety and staffing that protects both staff and patients. The consolidation of healthcare leaves all of us at the mercy of healthcare corporations. There have been three healthcare strikes in recent memory in the state, and one currently in Oregon. UI accessibility would help these not be as damaging.

**Christopher T. Bui, member Local IAM Local 700:** Supports the bill, states they were hired in 2017 after the 2016, 5-year contract ratification went through contract negotiations in May of 2022. States that in 2021 they bought a home, and while in negotiations wondering if the Union was forced to take a strike vote due to the company's bad faith actions, how long would they be on strike, and how would they pay the bills. States bill will incentivize companies to bargain in better faith. By allowing us some much-needed financial support and stability, directly leading to less strikes and more reasonable contracts.

**Christopher Jackson, member Local IAM Local 700:** Supports the bill. States they are a Navy Vet that is proud to supply commercial airlines as well as the US military and allies with jet engines. During the Pandemic He learned he was classified as an essential worker, and there at least 3 covid related deaths, and despite that they never missed a beat. They never desire a strike, however sometimes a strike is necessary. UI compensation should be available to striking workers. We are part of the Tri State and New York and New Jersey already allow UI benefits to strikers.

**Kylie McCarthy, member Local IAM Local 700:** Supports the bill. States they are a shop steward and take that responsibility very seriously. Allowing workers to access UI while

striking gives them better control over their working conditions. No one deserves to be underpaid, work in unsafe conditions, go without healthcare, or be without a retirement plan. Personal history with strikes starting at 4 years old in 2001 when father went on strike. The strike was 10 days and came with big wins for workers and the state. in 2009 her father again worked to keep jobs in Connecticut even with the loss of the Cheshire plant. This is why it's important for workers to be able to strike to hold corporations accountable to agreements. UI being available to striking workers will help the bargaining process.

**Mark Nati, member Local IAM Local 700:** Supports the bill. States they have worked at Pratt & Whitney since 1985 and has been through 12 negotiations and been on strike twice. Once the union votes to strike you don't have a choice but to honor the picket line, workers that don't are never treated the same again. Strikes happen because employers do not treat workers fairly in negotiations and know that workers live paycheck to paycheck. States that bill will force companies to bargain in good faith, and they will not have as much power over workers. This bill will level the playing field, workers in this State deserve to have this protection that only help the state as a whole.

**Heather Merrick, member Local IAM Local 700:** Supports the bill. States they are machinist at Pratt & Whitney, that was involved in the 2001 strike. Striking was hard as a young mom but losing benefits was worse. States that she is now an older mom, worker, and woman and better prepared for a strike, but many people are young workers that face similar hardships she did. States bill be a lifesaver to workers and will likely lead to fewer strikes.

**Gwen Mills, UNITE HERE President:** Supports the bill. States their union represents over 300,000 workers across the US and Canada and states that workers' rights are under threat and that their union will stand up to defend them. This year over 10,000 UNITE HERE members went on strike across the county. As Governor Lamont said on the picket line "workers took some real hits during covid." Workers striking for better pay face the possibility of weeks or months without pay this bill would help them exercise their federal right to strike for better working conditions.

**Patricio Sepulveda, Member of UNITE HERE Local 217:** Supports the bill. States they are a server at Hyatt Regency Greenwich that went on strike last year. States that since the Pandemic hotel workers like them have lost a lot. Went on strike because wages at flattened. Three days on strike was all it took to be taken seriously. This bill would help workers get what they deserve and stop strikes altogether by encouraging employers to take workers seriously.

**Charlin Serrano, Member of UNITE HERE Local 217:** Supports the bill. Cook at Hyatt Regency Greenwich and took part in the strike last year. Took part in the negotiations with Hyatt and is disappointed that the company didn't take the workers more seriously. The strike only took three days showing that Hyatt could have negotiated more seriously from the beginning. This bill will help workers exercise their right to strike and encourage employers to stay at the table and maybe avoid strikes altogether.

**Kevin Tobias, Member of UNITE HERE Local 217:** Supports the bill. States they are a Hyatt Regency Greenwich employee, and last year was their first strike, and that it was about paying bills and respect. Going on strike wasn't easy, everyone was worried about what

would happen if the strike lasted for months. It only took three days for Hyatt to start negotiating seriously. This bill will encourage Hyatt to avoid a strike altogether.

**Reynamar Ortiz, Member of UNITE HERE Local 217:** Supports the bill. Server at Omni New Haven and involved in the strike last year. Went on strike because Omni was refusing to give raises that kept up with the cost of living and lacked job security. The strike lasted 4 days and they won. This bill would have protected them from a longer strike and would have encouraged Omni to stay at the table to avoid a strike altogether.

**Francisco Tobias, Member of UNITE HERE Local 217:** Supports the bill. Has worked at the Hyatt Regency Greenwich for 30 years. Last year was their first strike, which they say was needed because Hyatt's proposals were unacceptable. Going on strike was hard, with the fear of not being able to pay bills. Proud they went on strike and got their 15% raise and a decrease in healthcare costs. States the strike didn't need to happen, it only took three days for Hyatt to start negotiating seriously. States bill will give more protections to workers and force employers to avoid strike all together.

**Carla Vallati, Member of UNITE HERE Local 217:** Supports the bill. States they're a room attendant at Omni New Haven that loves their job. States the strike had to happen because Omni was refusing to give the workers a cost of living raise. States the vote to strike was scary for many people because of the uncertainty. After 4 days on strike they got a good contract which only shows Omni could have afforded it all along. The new contract has made a big difference, but this bill would have taken away the fear of striking and might have kept Omni at the table to avoid a strike all together.

**Laura Kaminsky, Member of UNITE HERE Local 217:** Supports the bill. Been a cook for 19 years and thanks to the struggle of her and coworkers they have a great contract, with \$0 in insurance premium contributions. Contract expires in 2006 and doesn't want to lose what they have won. Went on strike in 1998 for better pay and benefits but it was easier because she was still living at home. This bill will make the potential fight for a good contract easier.

**Jahmal Henderson, Member of UNITE HERE Local 217:** Supports the bill. States that as a union worker and member of Local 217 UNITE HERE and a steward at Southern Connecticut State University, the work very hard to negotiate a fair contract, but if the employer does not bargain in good faith workers are faced with going on strike if necessary. Striking workers face financial hardship while exercising their right to strike, and we must pass laws to protect them and their families. That's why this bill is part of the Equity Agenda and why I, and the Communist Party that I represent, strongly support the bill.

**German Buitrago, Member of UNITE HERE Local 217:** Supports the bill, was involved in the Hyatt Regency strike, didn't want to go on strike but is proud to have struck. The Union won raises of 15% in the first year which will make a big difference. States they don't think a strike should have happened, because after only 3 days Hyatt Regency gave into demands. Bill would have encouraged Hyatt to stay at the table to avoid a strike altogether.

**Jennifer Chona, Member of UNITE HERE Local 217:** Supports the bill. Spent 20 years as a phlebotomist outside of the state but moved back to New Haven a few years ago. States made over \$20/hour with benefits outside the state but only offered \$10/hour for a more difficult position at Yale New Haven Hospital with no benefits, so took a job at Dunkin Donuts

which paid more. Took part in the picket lines at the UNH strike and saw the Omni New Haven Hotel workers get 14.5% raises. States unions benefit the entire community, and bill would encourage employers to negotiate with workers in good faith and allow workers to stand up for themselves.

**Bobby May, Member of UNITE HERE Local 217:** Supports the bill. Took part in the Omni New Haven Hotel Strike. Went on strike for fair wages, health benefits, and job security. States employees were tired of having to work multiple jobs for the pay of one. Won \$7 an hour raise over 4 years and more job security. States this was his first strike and that even though it was challenging this was what they needed to stand up to billionaires. Having access to UI would help workers hold the line for they deserve.

**Kadiata Lam, Member of UNITE HERE Local 217:** Supports the bill. Part of the Omni New Haven strike, stating that they had to go on strike because Omni's proposals were unacceptable. States the strike was scary, but the new contract is worth it. Can now afford a new apartment and maybe a car. This bill would have done two things, give us more protection and encourage omni to stay at the table longer.

**Barbara Pearse-Mabery, Member of UNITE HERE Local 217:** Supports the bill. States was part of the Omni New Haven strike, and went on strike because Omni's proposals were unacceptable, and would have made it impossible to live in New Haven. The strike was short, and they won 14.5% in the first year, which will make a big difference for their family. States this bill would have prevented the strike because Omni would have stayed at the table.

**Rocco Calo, Secretary-Treasurer Teamsters Local 1150, Vice President Eastern Region IBT:** Supports the bill. Spoke on the 2006 Sikorsky strike, how 3,500 members spent six weeks on strike for a better contract. States that the real challenge of a striking is being able to stand up for your rights, and that having access to UI would have helped and that employers use financial stability against workers. States providing striking workers UI would balance the power equation. States bill will allow workers to collect temporary partial wage replacement benefits and rewards employers who bargain in good faith by adjusting experience rating for those who don't. States that bill would also provide needed protections for warehouse workers against unfair quotas and production standards. States quotas are not wrong, but that it is unfair when workers are told what the quotas are or if they are being changed.

**James Case, CWA Local 1298:** Supports the bill. States that deciding to go on strike is an extremely difficult choice because of the loss of money, healthcare, and choices that disrupt your life. States when the other party isn't bargaining in good faith a strike is the workers' only recourse. States bill is designed to avoid labor disputes by keeping employers barraging in good faith knowing their UI rates will rise if there is a strike. States New York and New Jersey already have a similar law and striking workers accounted for 1% of UI expenditures.

**Kimberly R Edwards, CWA Local 1298:** Supports the bill. States that current law favors the employers in labor disputes as workers who go on strike are denied UI, however workers locked out by employers can access UI, this bill would fix that. It incentivizes employer to negotiate in good faith to avert a strike, or else risk a raise in UI taxes. These benefits are designed to support workers during challenging times. UI offers 50% wage replacement for up to 26 weeks; this isn't a bonus to incentivize longer strikes. Went on strike in 1998, which

lasted 26 days was challenging for the workers to get by. When workers strike, they positively impact all workers. Giving striking workers UI would mitigate some of the immediate economic risk to workers and their families and ensure they can negotiate a fair contract. It's time for Connecticut to follow New York and New Jersey's example.

**Mario Cilento, President New York State AFL-CIO:** Supports the bill. States the NLRA codifies the right to strike for better wages, benefits, and conditions, which establishes a balance between employer and employee, workers are often left with no choice but to go on strike forcing extended periods with no pay or benefits. NY State's UI law from 1935 has permitted striking workers to access UI. Both NY and NJ have shortened their time to 2 weeks. States that this encourages employers to be more earnest at the bargaining table. North Star Policy Action found no significant increase in strike activity from NY or NJ laws compared to other states. States bill would help mitigate financial hardships of a strike and would level the playing field and make a better standard of living in Connecticut.

**Thomas G. Mari, President/Principal Officer Teamsters Local 25:** Supports the bill. Discusses the Local 671 strike at iHealth and that the workers felt they had no other option but to strike to fix unfair labor practices. States that the Teamsters have a strike fund that allows workers to pay the bills while they are on strike, but not every union is so lucky, this bill sends a clear message to employers that they cannot stall out workers and are more likely to negotiate in good faith if their UI taxes might increase. States the bill also addresses the immediate need to hold large warehouse employers accountable for unfair quotas and forcing workers into unsafe working conditions causing serious injury. States that warehouse workers at Amazon and FedEx have higher than average injury rates and that a majority of them are serious resulting in transferring jobs or having to take time off to recover. Bill adds a statutory investigation if a warehouse injury rate of at least 1.5 industry standard and would allow employees private right of action for injunctive relief to obtain compliance. These actions prioritize health and safety of workers.

**Garon Miller, Member Teamsters local 671:** Supports the bill. States they are a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation truck driver, and that the bill is vital to ensuring the workers have the protections they need. States whether you're a CEO or a laborer we all have the same worth, but we are witnessing a growing disconnect from this truth. The mental health toll of striking is something that many workers face, including myself. According to the American Psychological Association, financial stress is a leading contributor to mental health issues like depression and anxiety. The mental strain only deepens when workers are unsure of how to support themselves during a strike. For workers already dealing with mental health challenges, the stress of striking can be particularly difficult. States bill will provide crucial support for workers, this financial support would ease the burden of fighting for fairness in the workplace. The warehouse worker protections are also essential to ensure workers do not risk long term health for productivity. This bill would provide financial and legal support for workers when they stand up for fairness.

**Tony Lepore, Member Teamsters local 671:** Supports the bill. Union leader that has been on strike twice and helped many workers through strikes, a decision that no one wants to make, but one that every worker knows might be the only action they can take with stubborn employers. Strikes happen in response to corporate greed, negligence, and unwillingness to negotiate fairly. Striking is hard for workers, with loss of income, losing their job, and even hostility from the public and media. This bill would send a message to abusive employers

across the state that they cannot expect to continue the practice of unreasonably and illegally stalling out workings in contract negotiations. The more protections workers have before they go on strike, the more likely they can avoid one altogether.

**Daquan McDougald, Member Teamsters local 671:** Supports the bill. Went on strike at I-Health in December with the strike still going at 2 months 2 weeks. This was not a decision taken lightly, and was done because of unfair labor practices, and refusal to bargain in good faith. Lost his income and health insurance overnight for himself and daughter. No worker should have to choose fighting for dignity and keeping their family afloat. This bill would make the system more fair and prevent companies from exploiting workers' financial desperation.

**Ruby Clarke, Member Teamsters local 671:** Supports the bill. States that NLRA gives workers the right to strike, but that many cannot use that right without financial support. The bill would allow all workers to exercise their right to strike regardless of financial situation, and not just let companies use financial attrition as a tactic. With 39% of households living paycheck to paycheck, these workers have no way to effectively advocate for better working conditions. This bill would level the playing field.

**Byron Cruz, Member Teamsters local 671:** Supports the bill. States they have been on strike at I-Health for three months, and that the decision wasn't made lightly but was the only way to make their voices heard. States Company had numerous unfair labor practices. States that after the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the strike they were all fired. States they want their jobs back with fair working conditions and believes the bill would help workers push for their rights.

**Augustin Ayala, Member Teamsters local 671:** Supports the bill. States that the bill will assist workers when employers are behaving lawlessly and would help the fair bargaining process by adding financial protections. This bill could make businesses act in good faith during the bargaining process. Going on strike is a last resort and is not easy. Also states that the warehouse worker protections in the bill are needed so companies do not impose harmful production quotas that put workers at risk of injury.

**Justin Donahue, Member Teamsters local 671:** Supports the bill. States that going on strike is not easy as the companies have all the power to stall and wait out employees. States strikes are caused because of unfair labor practices, companies breaking labor laws, and creating unsafe work environments. States the company stalled negotiations for 9 months and committed numerous unfair labor practices, didn't hire enough workers, took away previously accepted holidays, and forced excessive overtime causing injury. States they are lucky to have a union strike fund, but not every union does. States this bill will help workers get a safer workplace.

**Jashua Garcia, Member Teamsters local 671:** Supports the bill. States conditions in the I-Health warehouse were challenging with long hours, minimal breaks to meet increasing quotas and the last-minute cancelling of a holiday. Please for better conditions fell on deaf ears and led to further retaliation. Did not vote to strike lightly. This bill is crucial to help workers stand up to multi-million-dollar corporations. It will provide a safety net and warehouse [protections to prevent companies blatantly going against their workforce.

**David Gillett, Member Teamsters local 671:** Supports the bill. States he is a UPS employee and proud Teamster. States he was involved in the UPS contract dispute and strike vote.

Talked about how a strike would hurt his family in the short term and the stress this caused him and that bills don't stop just because of a strike. States the playing field is not even and the country was great when the middle class was great. States the bill would help all workers in risking it all to raise all boats around them.

**Emmanuel Gonzalez, Member Teamsters local 671:** Supports the bill. States being on strike is not easy and they have been on strike for 10 weeks, voted to go on strike because it was time to take a stand to get a contract. The company had been stalling for months. Went on strike to get better healthcare and retirement benefits. The strike has been unpleasant with the weather and the uncertainty of not having a job. This bill would provide warehouse worker protections and provide UI benefits to alleviate the stress of financial uncertainty of a strike.

**Lawrence Sanchez, Member Teamsters local 671:** Supports the bill. States going on strike is not an easy choice. They voted to strike because I-Health stalled negotiations for 9 months, changed working conditions, imposed harsh mandatory overtime, and took away a holiday as retaliation. The strike has been going since December 2<sup>nd</sup> and has been very hard. Luckily they have the Teamsters strike fund to help make ends meet. Hopes that this bill will help all workers in Connecticut stand-up for themselves. States the bill will not encourage strikes but be a much needed safety net, and will encourage companies to bargain in good faith.

**Ronerick Medina, Member Teamsters local 671:** Supports the bill. States is part of the I-Health strike that started in December. Decision to strike was easy because the company was delaying negotiations and forcing 72-hour work weeks. States he has been in the cold every day and that he is not going anywhere. States he is lucky to have access to the strike fund but knows that not every union has one. States bill would help workers stand up for better working conditions.

**Kevin Thomas, Member Teamsters local 671:** Supports the bill. States he is part of the I-Health strike that started in December, that is still going since they were illegally fired on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the strike. Decided to vote for an unfair labor practice strike because the company was stalling negotiations, was forcing 72-hour work weeks. States bill would help make companies treat their employees with respect, and have better warehouse workplace conditions for employees.

**Dolores Colon, YULA, New Haven DTC:** Supports the bill. States support for this bill comes from a history of building a union standard that helped thousands of families in the New Haven region. Involved in the Yale University strikes that raised the standard of living for workers. Worked during the great recession to bring attention to the job Crisis of New Haven's black and brown neighborhoods. States Unions are a key to solving inequality in Connecticut. States that while they are proud of their union's struggle, the bill would have made achieving this more easy and less disruptive for all. States this bill will encourage solving disputes peacefully.

**Mary Consoli, Western Connecticut Area Labor Federation AFL-CIO:** Supports the bill. States that workers that strike have not left their jobs voluntarily, and that workers only strike because of employers' bad-faith negotiations or harmful workplace practices. Was part of the 1981 Danbury Hospital strike, which happened because of staffing and wage issues. States

strike was financially difficult for many nurses to get through. States that the strike only happened because the hospital didn't bargain in good faith. A fairer environment is needed for positive negotiating conditions in Connecticut.

**Sydney Shuster, Member of UNITE HERE Local 33:** Supports the bill. States they were proud to stand with the strikers working for fair wages and benefits at Omni New Haven Hotel at Yale, and the Hyatt Regency Greenwich. They won raises of up to 15%. Local 33 also settled a great contract where they got dental for the first time, however their employer chose to stay at the negotiating table without forcing a strike. Many Politicians showed up to the picket line to show supports, and we ask you to pass this bill.

**Adam Waters, President of UNITE HERE Local 33:** Supports the bill. States he stood in solidarity with the Omni New Haven Hotel and the Hyatt Regency Greenwich as they went on a strike and won a 15% raise. Local 33 recently settled a great contract, for the first time in Yale history graduate teachers and researchers have strong protections and pay raises to match the cost of living, all done without the need to strike. This bill incentives employers to negotiate in good faith and ensure UI is available for workers when they are forced to go on strike. Elected leaders showed up for unions during the strike, please vote for this bill.

**Sarah Saiano, Member UNITE HERE Local 34:** Supports the bill. States that they are a retiree from a union job at Yale, and that the job was good because of the union. Benefits were good but pay was low, but the union meant a seat at the table. States they were involved in 3 strikes, and that they were tough decisions, because they felt badly letting their bosses and patients down to go on strike. States that if this bill was a law back then maybe negotiations wouldn't have gotten to a strike, and maybe Yale wouldn't have thought they could starve out its workforce. Would be proud to live in a state that has a law that levels the playing field in labor disputes.

**Kris Zahno, Member UNITE HERE Local 34:** Supports the bill. States was involved in the 2003 strike where the union worked for fair working wages, job security, pensions and healthcare. Going on strike was hard because of the loss of income but was necessary to get a good contract. Remembers making phone calls to utilities and cred card companies explaining he could not pay this month. The strike brought the workers together and there was better job security and pay. If UI was available, the strike would have been easier and more coworkers could have joined and the ones that crossed the line wouldn't have felt the need to. Bill would help workers get what they deserve.

**Tawanza McLean, Member UNITE HERE Local 34:** Supports the bill. States they are a union steward that has worked for Yale health for over 20 years. Was involved in the two strikes of 2003, stating it was a hard decision to make because of the loss of a paycheck, but was needed because she deserved better wages, stronger pension, and that Yale could afford to show workers more respect. In the end they won a great contract which benefited all workers, but the short term paid of striking was real and it took a long time to recover. Having access to UI would have made it easier for more workers to participate, and Yale probably would have settled sooner. This bill will bring more fairness to workers.

**Beth Cooper, Member UNITE HERE Local 34:** Supports the bill. Went on strike in 1996 and 2003 and chose to vote for the strike for better wages and job security and because collectively workers can make real change in the workplace. During the strikes she was a



single mom and the strike affected her and her kids and how they made ends meet which would be harder under today's cost of living. The decision to strike is not taken lightly, it's only done when the employer forces it. UI would make a difference to those that want to make their jobs better.

**Jess Corbett, Member UNITE HERE Local 34:** Supports the bill. States that in their 24 years in the labor movement no one makes the decision to strike lightly, and you only do because you feel like you need to. Involved in the 2003 strike that happened after 2 years of negotiation standstills. States the 3 weeks strike was hard but paid off and improved workplace conditions and workers' lives. States that bill would even the playing field for workers, and help bring employers to the bargaining table to settle contracts.

**Rebecca Corbett, Member UNITE HERE Local 34:** Supports the bill. States they were employed during the 2003 Yale strike and was scared to go on strike because of financial instability, but states that while working 40 hours a week they were still on state benefits. People were afraid of what would happen if they went on strike, but that what was won from the strike was worth it. States that UI during the strike would have helped and having it in the future will empower workers to fight for better working conditions.

**Adam Marchand, Member UNITE HERE Local 34:** Supports the bill. States he was involved in and helped organize the 2003 Yale strike. Remembers that while the strike was needed many members had to make big sacrifices to stand up for themselves. In the end it was worth it, winning higher pay and better pensions, with the legacy of that strike still having impacts on Yale today. As Alder of the 25th Ward in New Haven, I see how this legacy benefits the broader community. In recent years, we have challenged Yale to hire more New Haven residents, especially from neighborhoods hit hard by redlining and segregation. This campaign has made an enormous difference. This bill could have prevented the turmoil of a strike and passing it will encourage more employers like Yale to bargain in good faith and push a strike.

**Ellen Cupo, Member UNITE HERE Local 34, Supports, NEW Haven Board of Alders:** Supports the bill. States that the benefits she has today come from the strikers before her, and that for the last twenty years they have not had to strike at Yale because of those efforts. If she had to go on strike, she would but is unsure of how her family will make it and that UI would help provide for her children. States that unions are key to solving the inequality in the state. When workers go on strike they raise the standard for everyone around them.

**Barbara Vereen, Member UNITE HERE Local 34:** Supports the bill. Has been on strike 3 times, 1988, 2003, and 2008. Each strike was about getting better wages and pensions. Stated she went on strike because she was a single mother of 2 working 2 union jobs trying to make ends meet, living in public housing and barely putting food on the table. Going on each strike was scary, and she doubts if they would have had to if they had been eligible for unemployment benefits. The wages and benefits from the strikes allowed her to buy a house and send her kids to college. This bill will help to settle contacts peacefully by encouraging employers to stay at the table.

**Ann Delauro, Member UNITE HERE Local 34:** Supports the Bill. States has been on strike 3 times since 1992. During a 1996 strike worked a second job and was on the picket line 4

hours a day to get picket pay. The 2003 contract meant they only had to have 2 jobs instead of 3-4 to make ends meet, it was a good feeling knowing that the strike benefited everyone. For 20 years contracts have been settled peacefully because Yale wanted the future to look different. No one wants to go on strike, and no one should have to strike to win good contracts, this bill would keep employers honest so both sides can win.

**Frank Douglass, New Haven Board of Alders and Unite HERE Local 35:** Supports the Bill. States was a cook at Yale for over 20 years., went on strike in 1996 and 2003. Saw black workers get stuck in the bottom tier, unable to get well-earned promotions. Worked for the homebuyer program so that people could afford to live close to where they worked. Didn't get a paycheck while on strike everyone struggled, Union did a food drive to help, but everyday became more difficult. During strikes Yale would try to pit workers against each other. States bill would help bring a better standard of living to all workers.

**Win Heimer:** Supports the bill. States that some employers make unreasonable demands to force employees to strike to "starve them out", stating they use economic instability of employees to suppress wages and working conditions. When workers strike, they risk everything but there is sometimes there is no other option. Elected officials can do more to help a strike than just joining the picket line, by allowing striking workers to access UI.

**Shellye Davis, Secretary-Treasurer Connecticut AFL-CIO:** Supports the bill, states that bill recognizes the challenges workers face when exercising their right to strike, by providing a critical financial lifeline to strikers working for better working conditions. Workers shouldn't be forced to choose between food on the table and demanding fair treatment. Bill acknowledges economic realities that workers face and provides a modest temporary safety net. Connecticut can follow New York and New Jersey which have similar laws, workers should be left to struggle for exercising their right to collective action.

**Martin Feldman, New Haven Rising, CT State licensed benefits insurance agent:** Supports the bill. States that part of their job is working with employees throughout the state advising on insurance and employee benefits, many of these workers earn minimal wages in the service industry and live paycheck to paycheck, on about \$2400-\$2700 a month before taxes. When good faith negotiations fail there is no alternative but a strike. The recent strike in New Haven saw wages rise by 14.5% for hotel workers. Strikes often last too long, with employers are not willing to grant concessions. This bill will go a long way in bringing relief to those on strike and will encourage employers to negotiate fair contracts.

**Travis Glenney, Starbucks Workers United:** Supports the bill. States they are a supervisor and organizer at Starbucks in West Hartford. Current law unfairly blocks striking workers from collecting UI. Workers don't strike voluntarily but as a result from employers bad-faith negotiations or harmful working conditions. This is a labor peace bill that promotes good-faith negotiations, workers don't choose to go on strike lightly and this bill encourages fewer strikes by ensuring both sides have a reason to come to an agreement and avoid prolonged conflict. States In December they went on strike on Christmas eve and that got Starbucks to change their priorities, UI would have allowed the strike to last longer, which would lead to Starbucks coming back with a reasonable offer. This bill ensures that workers can exercise their rights and achieve a better workplace and standard of living.

**Seth Freeman, President of Congress of Connecticut community colleges:** Supports the bill. States bill is not just about fairness but also fundamental economic justice for working people. The decision to strike is not easy and is a last resort often forced on workers by bad faith employers. Employers have an unfair advantage because they can afford wait out their employees. By giving UI to striking workers Connecticut would ensure that workers do not face an impossible choice between standing up for fair treatment and feeding their families. Policies like these promote fairer contract negotiations, **this bill** is a statement that Connecticut values its workforce.

**Joelle Fishman, Connecticut Communist Party USA:** Supports the bill. Nobody goes on strike unless they are forced to, as the UAW said in their strike "Big profits must equal big wages and benefits for the workers who created them". At the end of 2024 unite Here Local 217 were forced to strike and won in a matter of days leading to improved conditions for workers at other hotels in the area benefiting all. Not all strike last two or more weeks. The threat of no income or losing their job is a chilling effect that makes it hard for workers to strike for a better workplace. Being on strike is a strain on families and communities, it's time for Connecticut to allow UI for benefits for striking workers.

**Keri Hoehne, Executive VP UFCW Local 371, First Vice President CT AFLCIO:** Supports the bill. States in that in 2019 they were one of the bargainers for the 31,000 Stop and Shop employees, this was not the first time they were on the bargaining team. In 2019 Stop and Shop came in with a different agenda to strip benefits and pay. The strike vote was unanimous, and the members emptied 200 stores in 15 minutes. The strike lasted 11 days, so this bill wouldn't have helped them, but they believe Stop and Shop would have been motivated to negotiate in good faith and wouldn't have forced the strike.

**Lee Wheeler, Member UFCW Local 371:** Supports the bill. Lead dairy clerk at Stop and Shop involved in the 2019 strike. Connecticut laws favor employers during a labor dispute, workers that make the difficult decision to go on strike are unable to access UI. No one makes the decision to strike lightly workers risk a loss of income and the permeant loss of their jobs. The strike in 2019 was necessary to make the company negotiate in good faith, because what they were offering was not enough to live on. This bill will not enrich workers UI only provides 50% wages for 26 weeks, it is a lifeline not a bonus that encourages strikes. Unionized workplaces benefit all workers and raise wages for all strengthening the economy. Our neighbors in New York and New Jersey already permit UI for striking workers it's time to follow their example.

**Lucille Sciarretto, Member UFCW Local 371:** Supports the bill. States she is a seafood manager at Stop and Shop Southbury and a union steward and was involved in the 2019 strike with 31,000 other Stop and Shop employees. States strike was necessary as the company wanted to eliminate healthcare benefits for spouses, gut the pension, and not give wage increases to many employees. States her and her husband both work for Stop and Shop and the strike vote was scary, but the company gave them no choice. States the Strike was hard for many employees and that UI would have helped, states that her and her coworkers are excited to see the legislature finally do something for the working people.

**Brian Simmons, Member UFCW Local 371:** Supports the bill. States he was involved in the 2019 Stop and Shop strike, and that everyone was afraid of striking but that they all felt the company left them with no choice. States he was a stike captain for the Waterbury, and while

shoppers were supportive the workers got more stressed and afraid as the strike went on. If UI benefits were available the strikers could have held out longer for a better deal, or the strike may not have happened because the company wouldn't have thought they could starve out the workers.

**Jake Serafini, Member UFCW Local 371:** Supports the bill. States he was hired by Stop and Shop in 2022 and that it was his first union job. States he quickly learned that his benefits from work were the result of the union's work and the 2019 strike and that employees from the strike talked about it like it had just happened. The strike lasted just under two weeks so this bill would not have applied but it would have meant the strike never would have happened. This bill will make sure striking workers no longer fear financial ruin for standing up for their wellbeing and it will give predatory companies incentive to bargain in good faith, avoiding strikes altogether.

**Stacey Zimmerman, Member UFCW Local 371:** Supports the bill. SEIU represents 75,000 members across the state. States that with the rise of oligarchy and consolidation of wealth working people's backs are up against the wall. Multinational corporations don't care about the local community, productivity has risen but wages and benefits have fallen behind. Workers who go on strike have generally taken every step during negotiations, and this is the last resort. In 30 years in the labor movement, she has never met a worker that advocated for a strike as a first step. This bill will give workers the opportunity to exercise their right to strike with less fear. UI is a fraction of wages and only for 26 weeks. Since 2021 there have been 21 strikes with only 5 lasting longer than 2 weeks, if those workers received UI it would have been one-tenth of one percent of total UI claims. Some employers use a "starve them out" approach to strikes, this bill is a meager attempt at helping our residents stand up for justice in the workplace.

**Michelle Noehren:** Supports the bill. States the bill is a necessary step toward ensuring workers who exercise their right to strike are not subjected to financial ruin for trying to improve their wages, workplace, and benefits. The right to strike is federally protected, but many workers are forced to choose between ending a strike early due to financial hardship or continue the strike to advocate for important issues. Allowing workers UI will help to level the playing field.

**Patrick Buckley:** Supports the bill. States they have been in politics and union organizing, and that any worker that goes without income should be entitled to UI. A striking worker deserves as much support from the government as an unemployed workers do, everyone not working needs to pay for the cost of living. Government giving money directly to the people pays massive dividends. The 2008-2009 crisis paid bailouts to business and that recovery was long, the 2020 stimulus checks went to people and the recovery was faster, This bill could go a long way towards helping people trust the government again.

**Lisa Bergmann, New Haven Peoples Center:** Supports the bill. States a history of being on picket lines and seeing the courage and fear of those on the line. States striking is always the last choice, that the uncertainty of knowing when a strike will end and if they can pay the bills. This bill would allow workers to stand up for themselves in a billionaire friendly and controlled system. States they are a teacher in New Haven and supports this bill because it will give the community a better life and future.

**Tonishia Signore, Policy Director at She Leads Justice:** Supports the bill. States bill would allow working class families to keep their head above water, while the striking family member fights for current and future workers' rights in our state, and employees who decide to go on strike do not make the decision lightly and are not doing so out of voluntary choice or preference. Occupational spaces such as healthcare and education are often impacted by unfair working conditions and therefore subject to the need to go on strike for workplace improvements. These industries are also spaces which are majorly occupied by women and women of color. In the interest of economic, racial, and gender equity in Connecticut, it is especially critical for striking workers in these fields and beyond, to be eligible to collect unemployment benefits after two consecutive weeks of striking. Connecticut law favors employers during a labor dispute, this bill add fairness by allowing striking workers to receive unemployment benefits after two consecutive weeks. It incentivizes an employer to remain at the table and negotiate in good faith to avert a strike. If they don't, they risk increasing their unemployment insurance experience ratings if the strike lasts longer than two weeks. States the bill will not enrich workers because UI is 50% of wages for a maximum of 26 weeks. States unionized workplaces raise the standards for all workers.

**Joseph Toner, Executive Director, CT State Building Trades Council:** Supports the bill. States the council represents 30,000 construction workers. States the NLRA guaranteed, the right to unionize and strike, and as a result working people saw improvements in the workplace. Recently those gains have been lost. Striking is a last resort only done when there is no other option. Currently UI is allowed to workers that are locked out or are not participating in the strike and part of the union. States the bill is designed to help deter strikes and encourage good faith bargaining.

**David Weidlich Jr, President CWA Local 1298:** Supports the bill. States union represents about 2,000 workers in the state, and that unionized workplaces raise the standard for all workers, but the process is undermined when the power shifts unfairly to the employer. Workers do not go on strike lightly and it is the last resort. Striking workers cannot get UI because current law presumes, they left their job voluntarily. Employers benefit from being able to wait out striking workers. The bill is designed to avoid labor disputes by creating the conditions for good faith bargaining. Connecticut should follow the policy successes of New York and New Jersey.

**Alexa Tapia, National Employment Law Project:** Supports the bill. States this legislation is consistent with the long-standing core purposes of the UI program and would have powerful benefits for workers, families, and communities across Connecticut. UI delivers essential support to workers, their families, and to the economy. UI was established to safeguard workers and their families against an unexpected loss of income due to unemployment and to bolster the overall economy during economic downturns. UI was also intended to prevent jobless workers from being obliged to accept employment that is unsafe, unsuitable, or a poor match for their skills and abilities. Striking workers are temporarily disconnected from their employers and paychecks. Many workers in similar situations are currently supported by the UI system, including workers on temporary layoff and workers participating in Connecticut Department of Labor's Shared Work Program. Striking workers and their families deserve the same financial support and should not be pushed into poverty for exercising their legally protected right to strike. Workers face economic uncertainty when their union votes to go on strike. Providing striking UI will help workers and their families continue to afford necessities. This bill also represents a step towards racial equity, because of systematic exclusion from

wealth-building opportunities, many workers of color are less likely than their white counterparts to have sufficient savings to make up for the lost income. New York and New Jersey already offer UI to striking workers there is no evidence that strike activity has increased in these two states relative to other states, providing UI protection to striking workers may lead to fewer strikes, as employers would be incentivized to bargain in good faith. It is also worth noting that many striking workers do not have access to strike funds, while those who do often get insufficient support, making them not an adequate substitute for UI benefits. Providing a small degree of economic security to striking workers helps ensure fairness in bargaining. When workers go on strike, they can win better wages, benefits, and working conditions, improving their lives as well as state, local economies, and other workers.

**Rochelle Palache, District Director 32BJ SEIU:** Supports the bill, States 32BJ represents over 4,500 workers in the state of Connecticut. States bill would correct the unjust exclusion of striking workers from unemployment insurance benefits. and help to restore balance to labor relations in the State. Members form the backbone of the property services industry building workers, security officers, and cleaners. States their union has fought to raise wage and benefits standards and improve working conditions in historically low-wage sectors. No union or worker makes the decision to go on strike lightly. It is an extremely difficult choice that can jeopardize a worker's ability to pay their bills and risk the permanent loss of their jobs. Workers opt to strike when they have exhausted all avenues provided in the collective bargaining process. By barring striking workers from eligibility for UI, Connecticut places workers at a significant disadvantage as compared with far better-resourced employers. By extending UI to striking workers, this legislation would take a critical step toward improving work conditions across Connecticut. It would also help avoid drawn out labor disputes. If an employer understands that striking workers will be eligible to collect unemployment benefits after a two-week waiting period, they may be more likely to bargain in good faith to avoid a work stoppage altogether.

**Michele Evermore, Senior Fellow at the National Academy of Social Insurance:** Supports the bill, States the Economic Policy Institute issued two studies demonstrating that covering striking workers would amount to a very small fraction of weekly claims, even when all striking workers apply for and receive benefits. Not providing UI coverage for striking workers makes it harder for workers to engage in legally protected activities. Unemployment insurance is intended to alleviate individual suffering and to provide wage stabilization by ensuring that workers do not have to accept a position far inferior to their old job, preventing wage erosion because of mass layoffs. The method of employer UI taxation, charges employers more as they lay off more workers, and is intended to serve as a means of layoff aversion. People who are out of work without pay experience income loss, and mental health consequences. It can affect children in these families for years. Connecticut has a reasonable system that provides modest income replacement of between 35%-45% percent of income in recent years, and generally about 40%-50% percent of unemployed workers receive benefits. Connecticut could also consider raising both the taxable wage base and weekly benefit amounts. interest. The unemployment system is also intended to keep workers attached to work. It is helpful for employers to retain trained employees whenever possible, and it is good for workers to maintain attachment to jobs they can perform well. A weekly unemployment benefit could keep workers on a prolonged work stoppage from having to go accept other work to make ends meet. These are workers who have not quit their jobs but are workers who can and should return to their jobs at the end of a labor dispute. There are also several reasons that workers can quit their jobs with good cause and still receive unemployment,

when an employer instructs them to break the law, the workplace is in severe violation of regulations protecting worker health and safety. Following that line of reasoning, workers should be allowed to engage in concerted protected activities and provided the means to do so. Encourages committee to pass the bill.

**Olivia Rinkes:** Supports the bill. States they are a student in CT and recounts a time when her mother went on strike at a hospital and how challenging that was for the family. No one makes the decision to strike lightly, or to earn a living on UI, the decision is made to improve working conditions. Providing UI to strikers is not taking the side of employees but supporting the workforce to help our communities. A strike is not intended to last forever, UI will make employers not be able to wait employees out making the system fairer. In this time with attacks on the NLRB it is important for CT Legislators to defend the rights of the workers.

**Aziz Dehkan Executive Director, Allison Pilcher Policy Director, Connecticut**

**Roundtable on Climate and Jobs:** Supports the bill. States Collective bargaining levels the playing field between employers and employees, allowing employees to avoid mistreatment and exploitation. This clarification would go a long way toward allowing workers to exercise their collective bargaining rights. Protecting the right to strike through financial support, many workers cannot realistically afford to exercise this right, undermining the power of workers. Employers often count on economic pressure to break strikes, knowing that workers will struggle financially without pay. Striking is a last resort for workers, and most cannot afford to go without pay for long. Providing UI after 14 days acknowledges that striking workers face real economic hardship. Employers may be more inclined to negotiate in good faith rather than prolong disputes to starve workers out, leading to faster resolutions. striking workers cut back on spending hurting local businesses UI would help sustain local economies during labor disputes. Workers do not strike because they want to, but because their employer refuses to negotiate working conditions in good faith. This policy doesn't eliminate the financial risks of striking it provides a crucial safety net that makes labor organizing more accessible and effective.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Frank Buccheri, Small Business:** Opposes the bill. States legislation is fraught with significant concerns that could adversely affect our state's economic stability and labor relations. UI is designed to assist individuals who are unemployed through no fault of their own. Striking workers, however, are engaged in voluntary work stoppages as a strategic component of labor negotiations. Extending UI benefits to these individuals conflates voluntary unemployment with involuntary job loss. Evidence from states like New York and New Jersey indicates that providing UI benefits to striking workers does not necessarily lead to an increase in the number of strikes, but such policies can still influence the dynamics of labor disputes. Unions may feel less economic pressure to reach timely agreements, potentially leading to longer disputes. While studies suggest that the cost of providing UI benefits to striking workers is minimal, any additional strain on the UI trust fund could increase the taxes to employers. Extending UI benefits to striking workers raises concerns about fairness and the potential impact on non-striking workers and small businesses. Non-striking employees, who continue to work and contribute to the economy, may indirectly bear the costs associated with increased UI payouts through higher taxes or reduced resources. Small businesses, which often operate with limited margins, could be disproportionately

affected by any resulting increases in UI taxes or assessments. This could lead to financial strain on small businesses, potentially resulting in reduced hiring or even business closures. Therefore, it is important to consider the broader economic implications and ensure that the interests of all workers and businesses are considered.

**Rebecca Karabin-Ahern, Co-President Acme Monaco:** Opposes the bill. States Connecticut is already expensive to be in and the bill would make it harder to stay.

**John Pelletier:** Opposes the bill. States voluntarily striking is not the same as a layoff. Businesses and consumers should not support funding this. Membership dues should pay for striking. UI should not be used.

**Michael Bindert:** Opposes the bill. States bill is unfair to non-union employees. All employers pay UI tax, and this will rise those costs, and make Connecticut more expensive.

**Bruce C. Stovall, VP for Public Policy at Oak Hill:** Opposes the bill. Oak Hill is a non-profit located in Hartford and is the largest private provider of disability services in Connecticut. Operating 65 group homes across the state, a full-service special education school, as well as camps, recreation facilities and many specialized services. Employing around 1500 employees of which about 1000 are unionized. joined Oak Hill in 1988 as a direct care worker and a proud union member working closely with SEIU 1199 on many issues. Currently Oak Hill and peer agencies are experiencing a critical staffing shortage. Of those 1000 direct care unionized positions over 400 are vacant, leading to service reductions. Our current funding level from our primary funder, DDS, works out to about \$17.50 an hour for our unionized members with Oak Hill add in a little more and the minimum is increasing. Stating Oak Hill would prefer funding and support for their unionized workers to go towards a fair, livable, wage. This would better assist the non-profits to attract and retain the vital and valued employees we need to deliver our services.

**Michael Thompson, Executive Director of MCAC:** Opposes the bill. States bill could have significant unintended consequences, it could adversely affect the solvency of the state's Unemployment Trust Fund, lead to delays on construction projects and raise costs for municipalities and the state. Additionally, the bill would undermine the collective bargaining process and shift the balance in favor of one side. States UI is funded exclusively by taxes paid by businesses, so they would be subsidizing strikes occurring within their own establishments. States bill could lead to more frequent and prolonged strikes. States that under current law striking workers do not meet the three qualifications to collect UI. States that bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket and put the UI Trust fund at risk of insolvency. States that the state had to borrow \$1 Billion for the Fund from the Federal Government during the pandemic. States bill would see UI taxes raise and incentive future strikes as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner.

**Michael Thompson, Executive Director of SMACNA:** Opposes the bill. States bill could have significant unintended consequences, it could adversely affect the solvency of the state's Unemployment Trust Fund, lead to delays on construction projects and raise costs for municipalities and the state. Additionally, the bill would undermine the collective bargaining process and shift the balance in favor of one side. States UI is funded exclusively by taxes paid by businesses, so they would be subsidizing strikes occurring within their own establishments. States bill could lead to more frequent and prolonged strikes. States that



under current law striking workers do not meet the three qualifications to collect UI. States that bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket and put the UI Trust fund at risk of insolvency. States that the state had to borrow \$1 Billion for the Fund from the Federal Government during the pandemic. States bill would see UI taxes raise and incentive future strikes as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner.

**Richard Connelly, President R-D Manufacturing inc.:** Opposes the bill. States bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that under current law striking workers do not meet the three qualifications to collect UI. States that bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket and put the UI Trust fund at risk of insolvency. States that the state had to borrow \$1 Billion for the Fund from the Federal Government during the pandemic. States bill would see UI taxes raise and incentive future strikes as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner.

**Jessica Olander, President CT River Valley Chamber of Commerce:** Opposes the bill. States the CRVCC represents than 550 companies and businesses that have business in all sectors of the greater Hartford economy, and work to foster a strong economic climate. CRVCC is strongly opposed to the bill and states that the cost of doing business in the state is already high. States bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that under current law striking workers do not meet the three qualifications to collect UI. States that bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket and put the UI Trust fund at risk of insolvency. States that the state had to borrow \$1 Billion for the Fund from the Federal Government during the pandemic. States bill would see UI taxes raise and incentive future strikes as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner.

**Gregory McGee, President PMP Corporation:** Opposes the bill. States bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that under current law striking workers do not meet the three qualifications to collect UI. States that bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket and put the UI Trust fund at risk of insolvency. States that the state had to borrow \$1 Billion for the Fund from the Federal Government during the pandemic. States bill would see UI taxes raise and incentive future strikes as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner.

**Mary O'Meara, SHRM-CP H&T Waterbury, LLC:** Opposes the bill. States bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that under current law striking workers do not meet the three qualifications to collect UI. States that bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket and put the UI Trust fund at risk of insolvency. States that the state had to borrow \$1 Billion for the Fund from the Federal Government during the pandemic. States bill would see UI taxes raise and incentive future strikes as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner.

**Ed Rodriguez, President/CEO Penmar Industries,Inc.:** Opposes the bill. States bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that under current law striking workers do not meet the three qualifications to collect UI. States that bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket and put the UI Trust fund at risk of insolvency. States that the state had to borrow \$1 Billion for the Fund from the Federal Government during the pandemic. States bill would see UI taxes raise and incentive future strikes as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner.

**Diane M. Ritucci, President & CEO Workers' Compensation trust:** Opposes the bill. States bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that under current law striking workers do not meet the three qualifications to collect UI. States that bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket and put the UI Trust fund at risk of insolvency. States that the state had to borrow \$1 Billion for the Fund from the Federal Government during the pandemic. States bill would see UI taxes raise and incentive future strikes as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner.

**Joseph Buomimcontri, Office Manager Richard Dudgeon, Inc.:** Opposes the bill. States bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that under current law striking workers do not meet the three qualifications to collect UI. States that bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket and put the UI Trust fund at risk of insolvency. States that the state had to borrow \$1 Billion for the Fund from the Federal Government during the pandemic. States bill would see UI taxes raise and incentive future strikes as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner.

**Garrett Sheehan, President & CEO Greater New Haven & Quinnipiac Chambers of Commerce:** Opposes the bill. States bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that under current law striking workers do not meet the three qualifications to collect UI. States that bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket and put the UI Trust fund at risk of insolvency. States that the state had to borrow \$1 Billion for the Fund from the Federal Government during the pandemic. States bill would see UI taxes raise and incentive future strikes as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner.

**Sharon L. Castelli, MSW MEd MS Chief Executive Officer Chrysalis Center:** Opposes the bill. States bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that under current law striking workers do not meet the three qualifications to collect UI. States that bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket and put the UI Trust fund at risk of insolvency. States that the state had to borrow \$1 Billion for the Fund from the Federal Government during the pandemic. States bill would see UI taxes raise and incentive future strikes as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner.

**Sarah Mendillo, on behalf of Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce:** Opposes the bill. States bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that under current law striking workers do not meet the three qualifications to collect UI. States that bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket and put the UI Trust fund at risk of insolvency. States that the state had to borrow \$1 Billion for the Fund from the Federal Government during the pandemic. States bill would see UI taxes raise and incentive future strikes as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner.

**Matthew Brush, Chief HR Officer of PCX Aerostructures, LLC dba PCX Aerosystems:** Opposes the bill. Stated that UI should remain eligible to those it already is, that it is already employee-friendly interpretation that doesn't need expanding. some states allow employees who are striking for certain non-economic reasons to collect unemployment benefits, less than a handful do so when the strike is for economic reasons. Striking employees are exercising their protected rights to withhold labor, meaning they do not qualify for unemployment. States bill would reduce the perceived cost of a strike for union members, undermining the intent of the NLRA to encourage both parties to settle labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner, and increasing the risk of strikes which harm both parties, with

negative knock-on effects in the broader economy. States UI Trust Fund should be reserved for employees who are unemployed through no fault of their own, are actively looking for work, and are available for work.

**Kristen Brainerd Abrahamson, Executive Vice President of MCAC:** Opposes the bill, and specifically requests removal of section 10. States that the bill would have many unintended consequences, like threatening the solvency of the unemployment trust fund, delays in construction projects, raising costs for municipalities, and would also unfairly tip the scales in collective bargaining towards labor and against management. Further states that the unemployment trust fund has insolvency issues from the COVID pandemic and that the state had to borrow money from the federal government for the fund. Also states that unemployment insurance is meant for workers that lose their job through no fault of their own and that the trust fund is paid by business owners and not workers. Also states that this bill could lead to more frequent and prolonged strikes, and that striking workers do not meet the criteria to receive unemployment insurance.

**Paul Amarone, Public Policy Associate & Advocacy Manager of CBIA:** Opposes the Bill. States that Bill would place undue burdens onto businesses in the state. States that many of the proposals from the bill are already implemented by businesses so it is unnecessary, and that having to report to the state would put undue burdens on businesses. States that warehouses are a fast paced consistently changing environment and that a one size fits all approach of this bill is not realistic. Also states that allowing private right of action against employers will add undue burdens and risk to employers. Also states that the "any adverse action" wording is too vague. States that existing federal and state laws already provide decent workplace protections and adding more reduces employers' competition in the marketplace and encourages litigation. Also states that striking workers do not qualify for unemployment and changing the law would further burden the states' UI trust fund.

**Anonymous Anonymous:** Opposes the bill. States that bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that striking workers don't meet the 3 requirements under law to qualify for UI. States passing bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket for businesses and put the UI Trust Fund at risk of insolvency. UI taxes rose when the State borrowed \$1 Billion from the federal government. Bill will increase those and have other unintended consequences, and incentive workers to go on strike, as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner. The UI trust fund should be saved for worked unemployed through no fault of their own, are actively looking for work, and are available for work.

**Katie D'Agostino, President & CEO Central CT Chambers of Commerce:** Opposes the bill. Has members businesses across every sector of the economy, employing thousands of workers. States bill will not make the cost of doing business more affordable. Employees involved in a labor dispute are not eligible for unemployment benefits based on any of the three eligibility requirements from DOL. State this bill disregards that and adds significant cost increases for employers. States bill will lead to an increase in unemployment insurance taxes for our members and would put the state's UI Trust Fund in jeopardy for the foreseeable future. States members recently saw an increase in their UI taxes after the state borrowed more than \$1 billion from the federal government during the pandemic. States members cite the cost of doing business as one of the biggest hurdles to growing their workforce and keeping costs down.

**Michael Anonymous, President & Taxpayer:** Opposes the bill, States that taxpayers subsidizing workers choice to strike is ridiculous, and the state shouldn't take sides in a labor dispute. The bill would raise the cost for employers. Striking workers do not qualify for UI benefits. This bill will cause a spike in UI taxes and incentivize striking. The UI Trust Fund should be reserved for employees who are unemployed through no fault of their own, are actively looking for work and are available for work. States the state recently borrowed more than \$1 billion from the federal government during the pandemic. States members cite the cost of doing business as one of the biggest hurdles to growing their workforce and keeping costs down.

**TJ Oneglia, O&G Industries:** Opposes the bill. States they support the testimony of CBIA and CCIA. company employs up to 1000 residents during peak construction times, and they collectively bargain in good faith stating this bill would undermine the predicate of good faith collective bargaining. States passing this law could lead to prolonging strikes, impacting construction timelessness and costs, encourage larger strikes of more unions, and employers subsidizing strikes against them. UI is meant to protect people that involuntarily lose their jobs, this bill would now make it part of a tactic to be used in a labor dispute. Striking workers should not qualify for UI, the state, unions, and businesses should all have something to lose if they cannot resolve their bargaining through traditional negotiations.

**Don Shubert, CCIA:** Opposes the bill. States the bill would tip the balance of collective bargaining too far in one direction and encourages strikes. providing employees with UI while on strike unbalances the negotiating positions of the parties by taking the most serious factor of foregoing wages out of a strike. Delays on construction projects are expensive to all participants strikes on active construction projects delay completion and increase costs. This bill could mean owners will protect against delays and additional costs due strikes by avoiding selecting union construction companies. Similarly, construction material producers lose short and long-term business during a strike. Unbalancing key bargaining factors and incentivizing strikers may provide a benefit to employees in some industries and specific instances. Because of its potential overall negative implications on the union construction companies and their employees they ask the committee to consider this proposal carefully.

**Kenneth Yurch, Infotech automation:** Opposes the bill. States that bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that striking workers don't meet the 3 requirements under law to qualify for UI. States passing bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket for businesses and put the UI Trust Fund at risk of insolvency. UI taxes rose when the State borrowed \$1 Billion from the federal government. Bill will increase those and have other unintended consequences, and incentive workers to go on strike, as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner. The UI trust fund should be saved for worked unemployed through no fault of their own, are actively looking for work, and are available for work.

**C. Marcella Kurowski, Wallingford:** Opposes the bill, statin if passed, bill would encourage workers to strike, thus disrupting business.

**Angela S. Petitti, VP Gary's East Coast Ervice, Inc.:** Opposes the bill. States that bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that striking workers don't meet the 3

requirements under law to qualify for UI. States passing bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket for businesses and put the UI Trust Fund at risk of insolvency. UI taxes rose when the State borrowed \$1 Billion from the federal government. Bill will increase those and have other unintended consequences, and incentive workers to go on strike, as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner. The UI trust fund should be saved for worked unemployed through no fault of their own, are actively looking for work, and are available for work.

**Mary Beth Womer, The Plastic Forming Company, inc.:** Opposes the bill. States that bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that striking workers don't meet the 3 requirements under law to qualify for UI. States passing bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket for businesses and put the UI Trust Fund at risk of insolvency. UI taxes rose when the State borrowed \$1 Billion from the federal government. Bill will increase those and have other unintended consequences, and incentive workers to go on strike, as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner. The UI trust fund should be saved for worked unemployed through no fault of their own, are actively looking for work, and are available for work.

**Joseph Buonincontri, Office Manager Richard Dudgeon, Inc.:** Opposes the bill. States that bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that striking workers don't meet the 3 requirements under law to qualify for UI. States passing bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket for businesses and put the UI Trust Fund at risk of insolvency. UI taxes rose when the State borrowed \$1 Billion from the federal government. Bill will increase those and have other unintended consequences.

**Mathew J. Desjarlais, President John M Dean Co., LLC:** Opposes the bill. States company manufactures custom wire products, has only 10 employees and is in a region plagued by substance abuse and mental issues, so it is difficult to obtain skilled labor. States bill would increase costs for employers in the state, causing UI taxes to skyrocket. Stating bill would put the UI trust fund at risk of insolvency. Stating that the state had to borrow \$1 Billion during the pandemic. Bill would have unintended consequences and would incentivize people to go on strike, instead of settling labor disputes in a timely manner. The UI trust fund should be saved for worked unemployed through no fault of their own, are actively looking for work, and are available for work.

**David W. DiScala, VP A. V. Tuchy, Inc:** Opposes the bill. States that bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that striking workers don't meet the 3 requirements under law to qualify for UI. States passing bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket for businesses and put the UI Trust Fund at risk of insolvency. UI taxes rose when the State borrowed \$1 Billion from the federal government. Bill will increase those and have other unintended consequences, and incentive workers to go on strike, as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner. The UI trust fund should be saved for worked unemployed through no fault of their own, are actively looking for work, and are available for work.

**William P. Dragan, Centrix Incorporated:** Opposes the bill. States that bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that striking workers don't meet the 3 requirements under law to qualify for UI. States passing bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket for

businesses and put the UI Trust Fund at risk of insolvency. UI taxes rose when the State borrowed \$1 Billion from the federal government. Bill will increase those and have other unintended consequences, and incentive workers to go on strike, as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner. The UI trust fund should be saved for worked unemployed through no fault of their own, are actively looking for work, and are available for work.

**Susan Falotico, Budget printers & embroiderers:** Opposes the bill. States that bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that striking workers don't meet the 3 requirements under law to qualify for UI. States passing bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket for businesses and put the UI Trust Fund at risk of insolvency. UI taxes rose when the State borrowed \$1 Billion from the federal government. Bill will increase those and have other unintended consequences, and incentive workers to go on strike, as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner. The UI trust fund should be saved for worked unemployed through no fault of their own, are actively looking for work, and are available for work.

**Lisa M. Dean, QKA Vice President, Heritage Benefit Consultants Inc.:** Opposes the bill. States that bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that striking workers don't meet the 3 requirements under law to qualify for UI. States passing bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket for businesses and put the UI Trust Fund at risk of insolvency. UI taxes rose when the State borrowed \$1 Billion from the federal government. Bill will increase those and have other unintended consequences, and incentive workers to go on strike, as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner. The UI trust fund should be saved for worked unemployed through no fault of their own, are actively looking for work, and are available for work.

**Frank DiCristina, Site Manager Allnex USA:** Opposes the bill. States that bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that striking workers don't meet the 3 requirements under law to qualify for UI. States passing bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket for businesses and put the UI Trust Fund at risk of insolvency. UI taxes rose when the State borrowed \$1 Billion from the federal government. Bill will increase those and have other unintended consequences, and incentive workers to go on strike, as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner. The UI trust fund should be saved for worked unemployed through no fault of their own, are actively looking for work, and are available for work.

**Bruce Dworak, Site Director Hobson & Motzer LLC:** Opposes the bill. States that bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that striking workers don't meet the 3 requirements under law to qualify for UI. States passing bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket for businesses and put the UI Trust Fund at risk of insolvency. UI taxes rose when the State borrowed \$1 Billion from the federal government. Bill will increase those and have other unintended consequences, and incentive workers to go on strike, as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner. The UI trust fund should be saved for worked unemployed through no fault of their own, are actively looking for work, and are available for work.

**Dragan Jovanovic, COO New England Tool Corporation:** Opposes the bill. States that bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that striking workers don't meet the 3

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**Jacqueline Laramee, President NDC Commercial Construction:** Opposes the bill. States that bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that striking workers don't meet the 3 requirements under law to qualify for UI. States passing bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket for businesses and put the UI Trust Fund at risk of insolvency. UI taxes rose when the State borrowed \$1 Billion from the federal government. Bill will increase those and have other unintended consequences, and incentive workers to go on strike, as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner. The UI trust fund should be saved for worked unemployed through no fault of their own, are actively looking for work, and are available for work.

**Maria Tralongo, Resident of East Hampton, advocate for small businesses:** Opposes the bill. States that bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that striking workers don't meet the 3 requirements under law to qualify for UI. States passing bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket for businesses and put the UI Trust Fund at risk of insolvency. UI taxes rose when the State borrowed \$1 Billion from the federal government. Bill will increase those and have other unintended consequences, and incentive workers to go on strike, as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner. The UI trust fund should be saved for worked unemployed through no fault of their own, are actively looking for work, and are available for work.

**Cori-Lynn Webber, Member Manager of law Office of Cori-Lynn S. Webber LLC:** Opposes the bill. States that bill would increase costs for employers in the state. States that striking workers don't meet the 3 requirements under law to qualify for UI. States passing bill would cause UI taxes to skyrocket for businesses and put the UI Trust Fund at risk of insolvency. UI taxes rose when the State borrowed \$1 Billion from the federal government. Bill will increase those and have other unintended consequences, and incentive workers to go on strike, as opposed to settling labor disputes fairly and in a timely manner. The UI trust fund should be saved for worked unemployed through no fault of their own, are actively looking for work, and are available for work.

**Reported by: Ian Graves**

**Date: 3/18/2025**