

Labor and Public Employees Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6907

AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF QUOTAS BY WAREHOUSE

Title: DISTRIBUTION CENTERS.

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 workers at warehouses, who offer suffer high rates of injury, are protected from quotas that require them to work at potentially unreasonably high speed for prolonged periods of time with limited breaks. Any quotas would have to be provided in writing and would have to ensure that workers would be able to take necessary and reasonable breaks, in order to ensure their own safety and well-being in the workplace.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None provided.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 of 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.

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 2nd 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

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.

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.

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 2nd 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.

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 2nd 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.

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.

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.

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 round 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 1st and 3rd 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.

Patrick Leonard, Lead organizer of CT and RI for the Teamsters Amazon Division:

Supports the bill. States they have seen firsthand the impact that Amazon has had on its workers, states works for UPS, as a package car driver, but also worked in the warehouse, loading the cars and trailers, which is brutal work, but we had a union and a collective bargaining agreement to ensure that we got a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. States Amazon is undercutting all that by using quotas to push workers to move faster and faster. oftentimes workers don't know exactly what quota they must meet, or how close they are to getting there, with many ways to get hurt in a warehouse if you are forced to put production ahead of your safety. If workers went on strike, they couldn't pay their bills, they are already struggling to make ends meet and Amazon's history of using litigation to stall. Workers knowing that they will receive UI could empower workers to stand up against their exploitation to fight for fairness and respect. We need this bill to set baseline standards that all warehouse companies can be held to. You shouldn't have to choose between your safety and keeping your job. You shouldn't have to choose between taking your break and making rate.

Robert Ziobrowski, Secretary-Treasurer & Principal Officer: Supports the bill. States the bill would add much needed protections for warehouse workers from unreasonable quotas that violate their rights and occupational safety and health standards, and which will provide support for workers who are forced to strike to achieve fairness within their workplace. States that employers set quotas that are unfair, unrealistic, and unachievable on a consistent basis and that employers are aware of all of this given their high turnover and injury rates. States the bill will add much needed protections from these unfair quotas and tracking tactics that violate workers' rights. Also states that the UI for striking workers is a needed to help workers advocate for themselves in the workplace. States the bill will level the playing field between employees and employers.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None provided

Reported by: Ian Graves

Date: 3/18/2025