



# House of Representatives

General Assembly

**File No. 237**

February Session, 2026

House Bill No. 5279

*House of Representatives, March 30, 2026*

The Committee on Labor and Public Employees reported through REP. SANCHEZ, E. of the 24th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the bill ought to pass.

***AN ACT ADDING WITNESSING A SERIOUS PHYSICAL INJURY AS A QUALIFYING EVENT FOR PURPOSES OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS INJURY WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Subsection (a) of section 31-294k of the general statutes is  
2 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October*  
3 *1, 2026*):

4 (a) As used in this section:

5 (1) "COVID-19" means the respiratory disease designated by the  
6 World Health Organization on February 11, 2020, as coronavirus 2019,  
7 and any related mutation thereof recognized by the World Health  
8 Organization as a communicable respiratory disease;

9 (2) "Eligible individual" means a police officer, firefighter, emergency  
10 medical services personnel, Department of Correction employee,  
11 telecommunicator or health care provider, and on and after January 1,

12 2024, an employee;

13 (3) "Emergency medical services personnel" has the same meaning as  
14 provided in section 20-206jj;

15 (4) "Employee" has the same meaning as provided in section 31-275;

16 (5) "Firefighter" has the same meaning as provided in section 7-313g;

17 (6) "Health care provider" means (A) a person employed at a doctor's  
18 office, hospital, health care center, clinic, medical school, local health  
19 department or agency, nursing facility, retirement facility, nursing  
20 home, group home, home health care provider, any facility that  
21 performs laboratory or medical testing, pharmacy or any similar  
22 institution, or (B) a person employed to provide personal care  
23 assistance, as defined in section 17b-706, in or about a private dwelling,  
24 provided such person is regularly employed by the owner or occupier  
25 of the dwelling for more than twenty-six hours per week;

26 (7) "In the line of duty" means any action that an eligible individual  
27 is obligated or authorized by law, rule, regulation or written condition  
28 of employment service to perform, or for which the eligible individual  
29 is compensated by the public entity such individual serves, except that,  
30 in the case of a volunteer firefighter, such action or service constitutes  
31 fire duties, as defined in subsection (b) of section 7-314b;

32 (8) "Mental health professional" means a board-certified psychiatrist  
33 or a psychologist licensed pursuant to chapter 383, who has experience  
34 diagnosing and treating post-traumatic stress injury;

35 (9) "Parole officer" means an employee of the Department of  
36 Correction who supervises inmates in the community after their release  
37 from prison on parole or under another prison release program;

38 (10) "Police officer" has the same meaning as provided in section 7-  
39 294a, except that "police officer" does not include an officer of a law  
40 enforcement unit of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe or the Mohegan  
41 Tribe of Indians of Connecticut;

42 (11) "Post-traumatic stress injury" means an injury that meets the  
43 diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder as specified in the  
44 most recent edition of the American Psychiatric Association's  
45 "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders";

46 (12) "Qualifying event" means:

47 (A) An event occurring in the line of duty on or after July 1, 2019, in  
48 which a police officer, parole officer, firefighter, emergency medical  
49 services personnel, Department of Correction employee or  
50 telecommunicator:

51 (i) Views a deceased minor;

52 (ii) Witnesses the death of a person or an incident involving the death  
53 of a person;

54 (iii) Witnesses an injury to a person who subsequently dies before or  
55 upon admission at a hospital as a result of the injury and not as a result  
56 of any other intervening cause;

57 (iv) Has physical contact with and treats an injured person who  
58 subsequently dies before or upon admission at a hospital as a result of  
59 the injury and not as a result of any other intervening cause;

60 (v) Carries an injured person who subsequently dies before or upon  
61 admission at a hospital as a result of the injury and not as a result of any  
62 other intervening cause; [or]

63 (vi) Witnesses a traumatic physical injury that results in the loss of a  
64 vital body part or a vital body function that results in permanent  
65 disfigurement of the victim; or

66 (vii) On and after October 1, 2026, witnesses a serious physical injury  
67 to a person that does not result in (I) the death of such person, or (II) the  
68 loss of a vital body part or a vital body function that results in a  
69 permanent disfigurement of such person;

70 (B) An event arising out of and in the course of employment on or

71 after March 10, 2020, in which an eligible individual who is a health care  
72 provider is engaged in activities substantially dedicated to mitigating or  
73 responding to the public health and civil preparedness emergencies  
74 declared by the Governor on March 10, 2020, or any extension of such  
75 emergency declarations; and:

76 (i) Witnesses the death of a person due to COVID-19 or due to  
77 symptoms that were later diagnosed as COVID-19;

78 (ii) Witnesses an injury to a person who subsequently dies as a result  
79 of COVID-19 or due to symptoms that were later diagnosed as COVID-  
80 19;

81 (iii) Has physical contact with and treats or provides care for a person  
82 who subsequently dies as a result of COVID-19 or due to symptoms that  
83 were later diagnosed as COVID-19; or

84 (iv) Witnesses a traumatic physical injury that results in the loss of a  
85 vital body function of a person due to COVID-19 or due to symptoms  
86 that were later diagnosed as COVID-19; or

87 (C) An event arising out of and in the course of employment on and  
88 after January 1, 2024, in which an employee:

89 (i) Views a deceased minor;

90 (ii) Witnesses the death of a person or an incident involving the death  
91 of a person;

92 (iii) Witnesses an injury to a person who subsequently dies before or  
93 upon admission at a hospital as a result of the injury and not as a result  
94 of any other intervening cause;

95 (iv) Has physical contact with and treats an injured person who  
96 subsequently dies before or upon admission at a hospital as a result of  
97 the injury and not as a result of any other intervening cause;

98 (v) Carries an injured person who subsequently dies before or upon  
99 admission at a hospital as a result of the injury and not as a result of any

100 other intervening cause; [or]

101 (vi) Witnesses a traumatic physical injury that results in the loss of a  
102 vital body part or a vital body function that results in permanent  
103 disfigurement of the victim; or

104 (vii) On and after October 1, 2026, witnesses a serious physical injury  
105 to a person that does not result in (I) the death of such person, or (II) the  
106 loss of a vital body part or a vital body function that results in a  
107 permanent disfigurement of such person;

108 (13) "Serious physical injury" has the same meaning as provided in  
109 section 53a-3;

110 ~~[(13)]~~ (14) "Telecommunicator" has the same meaning as provided in  
111 section 28-30; and

112 [(14)] (15) "Witnesses" means, for an eligible individual who is a  
113 telecommunicator, hears by telephone or radio while directly  
114 responding to an emergency call that constitutes a qualifying event  
115 under this section and providing a dispatch assignment.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	October 1, 2026	31-294k(a)

**LAB**      *Joint Favorable*

*The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.*

**OFA Fiscal Note**

**State Impact:**

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 27 \$	FY 28 \$
Department of Administrative Services - Workers' Comp. Claims	App Fund - Potential Cost	See Below	See Below

Note: App Fund=All Appropriated Funds

**Municipal Impact:**

Municipalities	Effect	FY 27 \$	FY 28 \$
Various Municipalities	STATE MANDATE <sup>1</sup> - Potential Cost	See Below	See Below

**Explanation**

The bill results in a potential cost to the Department of Administrative Services – Worker’s Compensation Claims and various self-insured municipalities beginning in FY 27 to the extent qualified personnel apply for workers’ compensation benefits due to the expanded population eligible for such benefits due to post-traumatic stress injuries.

Any potential increase in the number of workers' compensation claims resulting from this bill is not anticipated to be great enough to

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<sup>1</sup> State mandate is defined in Sec. 2-32b(2) of the Connecticut General Statutes, "state mandate" means any state initiated constitutional, statutory or executive action that requires a local government to establish, expand or modify its activities in such a way as to necessitate additional expenditures from local revenues.

result in a fiscal impact to the Workers' Compensation Commission.

***The Out Years***

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation.

**OLR Bill Analysis****HB 5279*****AN ACT ADDING WITNESSING A SERIOUS PHYSICAL INJURY AS A QUALIFYING EVENT FOR PURPOSES OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS INJURY WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE.*****SUMMARY**

This bill expands the range of “qualifying events” that allow employees to qualify for workers’ compensation benefits for a post-traumatic stress injury (PTSI). Current law generally limits these qualifying events to witnessing events involving someone’s death (for example, witnessing a death or an injury that subsequently led to death) or traumatic physical injury that results in their loss of a vital body part or function that results in permanent disfigurement.

The bill allows an employee to qualify for PTSI benefits by witnessing someone’s serious physical injury that does not result in their death or loss of a vital body part or function that results in their permanent disfigurement. Under the bill, a “serious physical injury” is a physical injury that creates a substantial risk of death, or causes serious disfigurement, serious impairment of health, or serious loss or impairment of a bodily organ’s function. As under the law for other PTSI benefits, to qualify:

1. the employee must witness the serious physical injury in the line of duty or in the course of employment;
2. a qualified mental health professional must diagnose the employee with PTSI as a direct result of witnessing the injury; and
3. the PTSI cannot be due to a disciplinary action, work evaluation, job transfer, layoff, demotion, promotion, termination, retirement, or similar action.

The bill's PTSI benefits for witnessing a serious physical injury are subject to the same limitations and procedures that apply to other PTSI benefits. Among other things, these (1) cap the benefits' duration at 52 weeks; (2) prohibit the benefits from being awarded more than four years after the qualifying event; and (3) require that employers contest a claim for PTSI benefits through a process that is generally similar to the one used for contesting other workers' compensation claims, although with different deadlines.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Labor and Public Employees Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 9      Nay 4      (03/12/2026)