

# Labor and Public Employees Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** HB-5003 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE STATE.

**Vote Date:** 3/17/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/3/2026

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor & Public Employees Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

The reason for this bill is to make a number of changes to the state's labor and employment laws in order to better develop Connecticut's workforce, and support teachers, first responders, medical personnel, and veterans within the state's workforce. These changes include, requiring financial liability for assaults on healthcare providers, teachers, and School employees in sections 1 and 2, a requirement that DPH implement a system to report incidents of patient violence in section 3, a Prohibition on promissory notes for all employers in section 4, and a task force to study the sub minimum wage for people with disabilities in section 5. It also includes an affirmative defense for healthcare workers who may inadvertently commit parking violations while on the job in section 6, a minimum Fair wage requirement for cannabis employees in section 7, portal to portal workers comp coverage for Public works employees and section 8, neutral arbitration for teacher termination in section 9, and a requirement that service contract workers be retained by new employers in section 10. It also includes coverage for survivors of volunteer firefighters killed in the line of duty in section 11, health insurance for survivors of volunteer firefighters and state Marshals killed in the line of duty in section 12, and a clarification on union payroll deduction for state and municipal employees in sections 13 through 15. Sections 16 through 18 provide free tuition at State colleges for police officers, firefighters, EMS, and state fire school students, section 19 requires CHFA to develop a mortgage assistance program for first responders, and sections 20 and 21 require the creation of plans to promote firefighting and law enforcement professions. Section 22 expands the CRISIS pilot program, section 23 allows non-CMERS municipalities to create a deferred retirement option, section 24 allows virtual monitoring evidence to be used in disciplinary cases for homecare employees, and section 25 requires DSS to post quarterly reports on Medicaid-funded PCA programs. Sections 26 through 32

make a number of changes to existing statutes on crane operator regulations, section 33 makes reimbursement changes to the school construction grant, and section 34 requires RESC to study work-based learning programs within the tech ed system. Section 35 requires OWS and the education commissioner to create a pilot program for private sector educator externships, section 36 requires regional Workforce Development board to include a regional Workforce navigator for coordinating, section 37 requires DOL to develop training on adult education, section 38 requires DOE to study co-instructional models of teaching, and sections 39 and 40 require reasonable accommodations for menopause. Section 41 provides reasonable accommodations for breastfeeding in the workplace, section 42 requires employers with at least 50 employees to make efforts to allow employees to work remotely in cases of inclined weather, section 43 sets new requirements for hospital staffing plans, and section 44 requires DPH to administrate statewide CNA training program. Sections 45 through 49 deal with employment opportunities for veterans, section 50 requires paycheck transparency, section 51 requires the disclosure of wage range and benefits, and sections 52 through 53 establish a grant program for Junior firefighters.

### **SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):**

**LCO 3401** adds provisions on a plan to promote the firefighter profession in Section 21, DOL training on adult education programs in Section 35, hospital staffing plans in Section 41, a certified nursing assistant grant program in Section 42, veterans' employment initiatives in Sections 43 through 47, paycheck transparency in Section 48, and wage range disclosure in Section 49. It also makes numerous minor and clarifying changes.

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

**Dante Bartolomeo, Commissioner, CT Department of Labor:** Ms. Bartolomeo appreciates the bill as it aligns with their mission to protect CT's workers and offers feedback on many sections. Section 10 expands CGS 31-57g to include certain service workers. The current laws allow the employee to take private action. The bill would also allow them to submit a complaint to the CTDOL. Upon receipt of the complaint the commissioner must hold a hearing under the Uniform Administrative Procedure Act. The hearing is not discretionary and would be labor intensive, resulting in a fiscal impact to CTDOL. The CTDOL would like this section to be amended to give CTDOL discretion on the question of whether a hearing should be held. They also request the sections effect date be altered to July,1 2027 to give enough time to have new personal trained and in place. Section 38 states that employers may require remote work if the business is closed due to inclement weather. If remote work is no possible the employers are required to pay the employees full wage and can't take out of sick leave, vacation time, or personal leave. CTDOL states they are unclear as to how this would be enforced. If a complaint process is established in CTDOL statues it would result in a fiscal impact to their agency.

**Nancy Navarretta, Commissioner, DMHAS:** They submitted testimony on many sections of SB 5003. Section 1 requires health care facilities to indemnify employees for financial loss resulting from assault and authorizes civil action with attorney's fees. DMHAS supports protecting health care employees from workplace violence and ensuring those who are assaulted are treated fairly. They state that DMHAS is committed to policies that support the workforce. DMHAS explains that the directive in subsection (a) and the definitions in subsection (d) may be inconsistent. It is not clear what facilities are intended to fall within the

definition of health care facility or institution. DMHAS adds that if the bill were to include DMHAS facilities then there are concerns regarding its implementation and interactions with existing law. Current employee benefits, wage continuation and leave provisions may conflict with existing workers compensation statutes. The health care provider definition could extend beyond clinicians to potentially include mental health assistants, social workers, nursing staff, administration personnel, and security personnel. The section that requires the employer to “protect and save harmless” employees from financial loss, is unclear whether this creates a new, open-ended indemnification obligation beyond current state liability frameworks. The private right of action raises questions regarding sovereign immunity and whether it creates a new cause of action against the state. The bill as written could create significant unbudgeted financial exposure and staffing challenges for DMHAS hospitals. Section 3 of the bill requires the DPH to develop a system allowing health care providers connected to the statewide health information exchange to report instances of patient violence and implement an alert system. DMHAS states they recognize the intent of the proposal but has concerns with the consistency of definitions of reportable conduct, overlap with existing reporting requirements, and the fiscal impact on providers that would have to modify HER systems. They also state there may be issues with data privacy standards within state and federal law.

**Charlene Tucker, Commissioner, CSDE:** Submitted testimony on a few sections of HB 5003. She states that lines 70-75 could be problematic for districts as it allows any such person who suffers an ascertainable loss of money to bring civil action in which a court can award damages including attorney fees. She states the section does not clarify whom or what civil actions can be brought and could be used to sue the school districts as well as the employee. Additionally allowing employees to file suit along with a workers compensation claim would provide school employees a benefit not enjoyed by other employees. CSDE states that section 31 would be redundant and that it would be important to recognize the Department approved definition for work-based learning that is based on research and the US Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education. WBL programs have three key components. Alignment of the classroom and workplace learning, applications of academic, technical and employability skills in a work setting, and support from a classroom and workplace mentor. She states that the department collects WBL programs across high schools and CTECS as part of an annual Comprehensive Learning Needs Assessment that is required to receive Perkins Funds. The department supports section 32's two-year pilot program to provide educator externships for certified educators but states doing so by January 1, 2027 would not be feasible. She suggests that the department spends year 2026-2027 on the design and development of the pilot program with an implementation by January 1, 2028. They also note that there is currently no funding for this in the Governor's budget proposal. Section 34 requires the department to study the effectiveness and benefits of co-instruction models of teaching used by Charter Schools and create a report. She states that there is no funding for this in the Governor's budget and it is unclear what the purpose of this study would be. She comments that the proposal only identifies the effectiveness and benefits but does not require the department to evaluate the inefficiencies or ineffectiveness of such a model. She states that the department always seeks to evaluate programs in their entirety to represent a complete impact of a program.

**Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Chief Workforce Officer, Office of Workforce Strategy:** Submitted testimony on HB 5003. She states that OWS is broadly supportive of section 32 that tasks them with working with the Commissioner of Education on establishing a two-year pilot program to provide educator externships. They support developing sector partnerships that

create clear school to career pathways for students. However, they state that any such program be fully aligned with the Governor's budget. She also acknowledges and supports the CSDE statement that it would be more feasible to spend the year 2026-2027 on the design and development of the program.

**Amy Porter, Commissioner, Aging - Disability Services:** Submitted testimony with general comments on HB 5003. Porter states section 24 of the bill would require DSS to post quarterly reports with specific information regarding services delivered by the state's fiscal intermediary. ADS and sister state agencies already engage in ongoing performance improvement with fiscal intermediary. They state in collaboration with DDS they have been working with the fiscal intermediary to address performance and accessibility concerns. ADS is concerned that additional reporting requirements created by the bill would further divert staff attention from their primary client centered focus. The reporting requirements would also have significant implications on self-direction remaining a service option. They state the current FI has experienced challenges with scaling up and this reporting would put additional strain on them. Having the performance data made public without context could also result in the FI withdrawing from the contract with the state.

**Jordan Scheff, Commissioner, Dept of Developmental Services:** Submitted testimony regarding certain sections of HB 5003. Section 23 would require an employee organization that contracts with DDS to provide employees subject to disciplinary action access derived from any virtual monitoring technology. DDS states they appreciate the intent of this section and takes audio and visual monitoring seriously, currently any use of these in an individual's home requires a formal plan, human rights committee approval and adherence to DDS policy. DDS respectfully requests further discussion to understand the intent of the legislation. Section 24 requires the DSS Commissioner to post publicly on its website and submit to the Human Services and Labor Committees quarterly reports. This would include all personal care attendant timesheet reports, budget, customer service telephone call center, service level agreement reports and various communications tallies. DDS stated they have significant concerns about publicly posting the information required in this bill. They state the legislation would divert the FI's primary responsibility away from payroll. Creating new reporting requirements on top of what is already required in the FI's contract will divert resources away from where the state needs the FI to concentrate. DDS states they do not have the existing staff capacity or resources to meet the additional reporting requirements.

**Sean Scanlon, State Comptroller, State of Connecticut Office of the State Comptroller:** Mr. Scanlon is in support of the bill specifically sections 11 and 16-19. He states that section 11 expands health coverage to the surviving families of volunteer firefighters, correctional officers, and state marshals. He adds that state marshals are not considered state employees, so benefits of 5-259 do not apply to them; he asks that the committee add them to 5-259. He then explains Sections 16-19 which waives tuition for police officers and firefighters who have served at least five years. He states that there is a trend since 2017 of declining firefighter, he believes this will slow the trend.

**Manisha Juthani, Commissioner, Department of Public Health:** Submitted testimony on HB 5003, stating that section 3 would require them to develop a system for alerting health care providers regarding patients who have been reported to the State-wide Health Information Exchange as being violent. Since DPH does not administer the information exchange, it would lack the subject matter expertise and statutory authority to develop this

system. If the legislation moves forward DPH believes that a different agency would be more appropriate for the development of this system.

**Andrea Barton Reeves, Commissioner, Department of Social Services:** Ms. Reeves claims that in Section 24 of the bill the DSS is required to publicly post Human Services and Labor Committees quarterly reports, starting with the quarter that ends in June of 2024. These reports include personal financial statements. The DSS agree that these documents should be accessible to people enrolled in their programs, however this requirement would not address identified performance concerns but instead it might do the opposite. Ms. Reeves specific concerns are restrictions of the Department's ability to amend performance measures as needed to ensure quality service provision, misinterpretations of data, and the potential to end availability of self-direction as a service. For these reasons she asks the committee to oppose Section 24 of the bill.

**Michelle Gilman, Commissioner, Department of Administrative Services (DAS):** Ms. Gilman states that DAS is in strong support of Sections 16-19 because it helps recruitment and retention of firefighters by creating meaningful incentives. To strengthen the firefighter recruitment and retention will also strengthen the entire fire service. She explains that some firefighters will move on to other related professions like fire inspectors. She adds that the DAS is also in support of Sections 25-29 because it aims to strengthen public safety and promote accountability in the state's crane and hoisting operations. This will give the DAS more tools to verify operator credentials, enter worksites to ensure compliance, and issue stop work orders. However, she does have concerns with Sections 1-2 and 30. She claims that Section 1 of the bill will have fiscal impact on the State's Workers' Compensation (WC) program because it expands the ability of a healthcare worker who is assaulted to be eligible for 100% benefits, and it also appears to require the employer to pay for assault related expenses even where a claim is denied. She is also concerned that in Section 2 it appears to allow an employee to bring a civil action in Superior Court. And she is worried that in Section 30 will create incentives for school districts to receive reimbursement for certain school building projects which will be based on specific reimbursement rates for certain projects instead of annually determined rates based on municipal grand list data.

**Ronnell Higgins, Commissioner, DESPP:** Submitted testimony on certain sections of Hb 5003. Section 20 would require DESPP to develop a plan to promote the law enforcement profession. They appreciate the intent and note the DESPP is already increasing outreach. They highlight law enforcement careers on social media platforms and partner with local agencies for recruitment events. Additionally with Public Act 25-174 CT state colleges detail program pathways and degrees for prospective officers. Section 21 calls for statewide expansion of the CRISIS initiative in partnership with DMHAS. This expansion is already funded in the recent biennium budget making this section redundant. Section 39 and 40 establish a grant program through the division of fire services for locally operated junior firefighter programs at volunteer fire departments. DESPP states they support the intent but funding for this initiative is not included in the Governor's budget.

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

**Jason Rojas, House Majority Leader, Connecticut General Assembly:** Representative Rojas is in support of the bill. He states that Section 4 of the bill will amend statute governing

employment promissory notes, which are agreements that require an ex-employee to pay costs to their former employer that result from their training. Current statutes prohibit this practice in companies with more than 25 employees, section 4 will expand this to all companies regardless of size.

**Rebecca Martinez, State Representative, CT General Assembly:** Submitted testimony in support of Hb 5003. She states that the death of her coworker, Joyce Grayson deeply affected not only their organization but healthcare providers across the state. It brought attention to the real risks healthcare workers face for simply doing their jobs. Section 3 of the bill addresses this gap by adding a safety alert to the statewide health information exchange when a patient is violent to ensure that information travels with the patient to their new care settings. Section 6 addresses another safety concern because often a healthcare worker is often forced to park blocks away due to local restrictions. Section 11 ensures that the spouse of a volunteer firefighter killed in the line of duty has access to the state health insurance plan for up to 5 years. She states that a grieving spouse should not have to worry about losing their health insurance or paying 100% of the premium after such a devastating loss. Ms. Martinez states Women's health is not a workplace inconvenience its workplace reality that employers must plan accordingly for. She also adds that Hb 5003 helps ensure that police officers and firefighters are supported, educated and able to live in the communities they serve.

**John Brady, Executive Vice President, AFT Connecticut:** They submitted testimony in support of multiple sections of HB 5003. They explained that healthcare workers experience assaults at five times the rate of other industries and those conditions contribute to the workforce shortage. Section 1 of the bill requires health care facilities to cover the costs from an assault and provide paid leave. It also allows the victim to sue for financial loss. Section 3 would require a method of alerting health care providers when any patient has been reported to the Statewide Health Information network as displaying violent behavior. Section 6 provides a defense for healthcare workers for certain parking violations that arise due to their employment. An example is given in which a visiting nurse must go to a neighborhood with poor parking or at a further distance that would put them at risk.

**Ed Hawthorne, President, Connecticut AFL-CIO:** Submitted testimony in support of HB 5003. Mr. Hawthorne stated section 1 ensures that assaulted workers receive guaranteed supports to remain in the field. Section 2 expands protections for teachers, school employees, student teachers and high education staff who suffer assault while performing their duties. Section 3 directs the department of public health to develop an alert system for incidents of patient violence against healthcare workers. Section 11 and 12 ensure that if a volunteer firefighter or state marshal dies in the line of duty their families can maintain health coverage for up to 5 years. Sections 16,17, and 18 provide tuition waivers for police and firefighters to help recruitment and retention. Section 19 directs the CHEFA to develop a mortgage assistance program for police officers and fire fighters who purchase a home in the community they serve. Section 20 requires the Commissioner of Emergency Services and public Protection to consult with the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association, institutions of higher education, other stakeholders to develop a statewide law enforcement recruitment strategy. Section 24 strengthens oversight of Medicaid funded self-directed home care programs by requiring public reporting of fiscal intermediary's audited financial statements and timesheet submission. Sections 25-29 modernizes oversight of crane and hoisting equipment operations. These operators work in high-risk environments and need a high level

of oversight to prevent job hazards. Section 38 prohibits employers from requiring works used accrued leave when a work shift is cancelled due to inclement weather and remote work is unavailable. Mr. Hawthorne stated that they oppose section 34 of the bill which requires the State Department of Education to study co-instruction models in local charter schools as it would undermine CT's rigorous certification standards. They believe that introducing uncertified instructors would create inconsistencies and reduce accountability.

**Kate Dias, President, CEA:** Testimony was submitted on behalf of CEA stating they strongly support HB 5003. They state that unlike other employees their termination is government by state statute. When a firefighter or police officer is terminated, they have a right to a hearing before a neutral arbitrator whose decision is legally binding. For most state and public employees' discipline is based on the legal standard of just cause however teachers are included under due and sufficient cause. The proposed bill will make it so that teachers are covered under just cause and have a right to a neutral arbitrator hearing this is binding. Section 2 of the bill would ensure that educators injured during their job would be able to receive full worker compensation. Section 15 protects educators right to bargain over payroll deductions. They believe this protection is essential to ensuring payroll systems are made collaboratively rather than imposed unilaterally.

**Victoria Lyons, School Nurse, Town of Meriden:** Ms. Lyons is in support of the bill. As home nurse she has experienced violence and dealt with many threats, she feels this bill is important to protecting home nurses. She describes an instance where she had been caring for a patient that was a known criminal. One day he was very upset and made a threat towards her, she says she left work that day very afraid. She says this is not the first time something like this has happened to her and she says it is time for something to be done about it. She says that the bill will create accountability for patients and safety for nurses. While continuing as an educator they suffered more injuries and felt the system failed to protect them.

**30 Public School Educators:** Multiple pieces of testimony were submitted by School Educators in support of the bill. They stated it will strengthen Connecticut's ability to recruit and retain educators by ensuring fairness when facing employment decisions along with protecting teachers in the classroom. They stated how it was unjust to allow a Board whose membership is dictated on popularity and party affiliation have the final say while the recommendations of trained professionals be non-binding. Many educators shared this sentiment in stating those decisions should be based on facts rather than politics. They believe that having the decision of a neutral hearing officer be binding would allow for this.

- **Scott Minnick**      · **Allison Pascucci** · **Steven Patarini**    · **Kathryn Petrucci**
- **Adam Phaiah**      · **Victoria Phillips** · **Emily Plude**        · **Lucy Regan**
- **Stephen Reisinger** · **Amy Stewart**      · **David Stockwell** · **Daniela Sturm**
- **Lisa Tryon**         · **Melissa Winalski** · **Audra Allen**        · **Ron Benner**
- **Jennifer Breault** · **Lisa Corrone**      · **Dave Dudeff**        · **Meghan Geary**
- **Shana Golden**     · **Stacey Guertin**    · **Amber Harris**      · **Brian Hassan**
- **Jeffrey Helming** · **Jennifer Larsen**    · **Margaret Layman** · **Jaimie Lindenmuth**
- **Asdrubal Luis**    · **Sandra Mangan**

**Gabriella Holmes, Business Agent, UFCW Local 919 and, Ivan Shang, Organizer, UFCW Local 919:** Submitted testimony in support of SB 352. They state that they are a union steward working at a dispensary and when CT minimum wage increased to \$15.69 their employer refused to raise their wages to the minimum wage stating they were tipped employees. This was even though tipping was optional. It wasn't until dozens of wage theft violations were filed with DOL that the company after 10 months that their coworkers were paid correctly with back pay. They state that a single cannabis employer cannot decide to pay their employees less than full minimum wage. That would be an industry wide determination that only the DOL can make after thorough review.

**Amber-De Souza, RN Backus Federation of Nurses, AFTCT Local Number 5149:** Supports section 1 of HB 5003 and explained that on Oct 8, 2025, they were assaulted directly in the chest. They were diagnosed with significant trauma to the chest that included a contusion of the left chest wall, sternum and intercostal neuritis affecting multiple areas between their ribs. After the assault their earned PTO was used during the initial recover period and for nearly 5 weeks away from work, they only received a portion of their pay. The sudden reduction in income was extremely challenging while they focused on healing their physical injuries. Due to that experience, they support HB 5003 as healthcare workers who are assaulted on the job should receive full wage continuation and should not be forced to use up all their time for a job-related injury.

**Elizabeth Crespo, School Bus Driver, Elizabeth Nieves, School Bus Driver-CSEA SEIU Local 2001, CSEA SEIU Local 2001 and Betsy Mercano, School Bus Driver-CSEA SEIU Local 2001:** Supports the bill if it is amended. They state they are a school bus driver for 12 years and has broken up fights, helped kids who were crying, and once helped a student who was having a medical emergency. They state experience matters for the job to keep everyone safe. When a city changes a contractor, they live in fear they may lose their jobs due to no fault of their own. They state that if drivers are not included and protected under the bidding process then they can be dismissed. Due to this they would like to include as a covered location a property carrier as defined in CT gen Stat 14-212 where employees are performing student transportation or related activities. Along with this they would like to add School transportation to the definition of service worker. If these changes are implemented, then it would give workers in their industry a 90-day transition period that would mean stability and safety.

**Adrienne DeLucca, General Counsel, CEA:** They support the bill and explain they have been in labor law for over 30 years and now proudly represents 40,000 public school teachers across the state. They hope that the bill would help protect teachers' rights and not their wrongs by affording them the same level of due process as every other private or public sector organized workforce. They state that Board of Education members are inherently biased as they may hesitate to vote against what their superintendent recommends, may have had their children be taught by the teacher, live in a community that closely interacts with them or be in the same district they teach. The issue that there is a great potential for bias while the proposed amendments would give them the same level as due process as every other represented employee.

**Melanie Kolek, Legal Counsel:** Supports the bill and states that any school employee who is absent due to injuries sustained during an assault are entitled to full salary during that

absence. If worker compensation benefits are received the district must pay the difference to ensure they have their full salary. They however state, that in recent years school districts have been taking the position they are not obligated to provide full salary in assault related absences if the student did not intend to assault the teacher. That interpretation has created troubling consequences. The districts are arguing that an assault under statute requires proof of an intentional act coupled with wrongful purpose. They state that their educators did not sign up to be bitten, punched, or pushed. They state they are not punching bags but professional committed to educating children. If this issue is not addressed assaulted educators may be driven out of the profession and future educators deterred from entering it. This bill is not an expansion of the law just a clarification of it to ensure the protections the legislature intended are meaningfully upheld.

**Christine Kane, School Bus Driver, CSEA SEIU Local 2001:** Submitted testimony offering comments on HB 5003. They state that they are a school bus driver and member of SEIU local 2001. As a bus driver they must know the kids well, intervene if they need help and make sure they get home safely. Without worker retention laws every time a city puts their transportation contracts out for bus drivers like them could be replaced by a new contractor overnight even though they have worked there for decades. They state on behalf of their school bus workers they as the committee to make two changes to the proposed worker retention law. 1 is to include as a "Covered location," "A property of a carrier as defined in CT Gen Stat § 14-212 where employees are performing student transportation or related activities." 2 is to add "School transportation" to the definition of "Service worker". This way bus workers would be covered under the protections of this bill.

**Christine Moreau:** Ms. Moreau submitted testimony in support of HB 5003. She stated that her husband Ray joined the Plainville Volunteer Fire Department in July 1990 and served for over 35 years. Ms. Moreau explains that on July 27, 2025 Ray responded to a working structure fire. That day she lost her husband and a few days later she got a call stating that due to his death she no longer had medical insurance. She states approving this bill removes the burden for families of fallen Volunteer Firefighters and ensures they can continue to have medical insurance.

**Zak Leavy, Deputy Director, AFSCME Council 4:** Submitted testimony in support of HB 5003 as they state it would provide meaningful support to workers across CT. The portal-to-portal coverage for public workers in section 8 would help as worker especially in winter alone have to drive inroads that can quickly turn dangerous. When a public works employee is ordered to work during a weather emergency that means driving through municipalities in various stages of snow removal. They also want to thank the committee for sections 11 and 12 that would extend survivor benefits to the families of correction officers and state marshals that die in the line of duty. They also indicate support for sections 16-21 as it would advance police officer and firefighter recruitment.

**Brian Mezick, President, State Marshal Association of CT:** Submitted testimony in support of HB 5003. Mr. Mezick stated they support section 12 of the bill which adds state marshals to the existing statute that provides insurance coverage to the surviving spouse if the officer is killed in the line of duty. He explains that state marshals execute capias mittimus arrest warrants, serve restraining or protective orders, conduct evictions, and enforce court orders. They must enter homes when tensions are high and the risks unknown. Mr. Mezick gave several recent examples of this with one being where a state marshal was executing a

capias warrant and was fired upon by the suspect after knocking on their door. Police officer and firefighters' families are already covered if they are killed as a result of injuries sustained in the line of duty. Section 12 would just extend those same protections to state marshals. Mr. Mezick states that in recent years it has been increasingly difficult to recruit new state marshals and hopes that with section 12 that would help and show that the state stands with them.

**Brian Andrews, Deputy Chief, Wolcott Volunteer Fire Department Company 2:** Serving as a Volunteer Firefighter has made Mr. Andrews see the challenges of recruiting, and retaining members, along with finding ways to recognize their volunteer work. He believes that this bill will address these issues. He adds that tuition benefits after five years of service is important for recruiting and keeping members. He states that after five years of service member tend to turn into long term members which contribute to the department in many ways such as trainings. The increasing costs have also impacted the number of recruits, any form of help in this area will allow more people to serve. For these reasons Mr. Andrews is in support of the bill.

**Kristen Barone, Psychiatric Technician, Waterbury Hospital:** Ms. Barone believes that the bill will create meaningful protections for healthcare workers that have been assaulted on the job. She explains that she has heard many stories from her coworkers of being assaulted and they are just expected to accept it. She states that her and many others like her no longer report attacks because they have noticed nothing changes. She explains that Section I of the bill will change this because it will require employers of healthcare workers to cover the costs of assaults, along with giving workers the right to report damages in court. For these reasons Ms. Barone is in support of the bill.

**Nate Brown, Business Manager / President, International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE):** Mr. Brown believes that the bill will create revisions that will prevent crane-related injuries or fatalities.

**Erica Donovan, Plainville Fire Department:** Supports the bill as they have been in the volunteer fire service for almost 30 years. Their department recently suffered a line of duty death, and it became very clear to them that there were few options available for spouses and families in terms of insurance and benefits. They state that paid firefighters are protected by the IAFF and union benefits while volunteer ones are reliant on their own minimal policies.

**Quinn Christopher, Plainville Town Council:** Mr. Christopher is in support of the bill because he believes the measures it creates are important to volunteer firefighters who make sacrifices to protect our communities. He states that families should not lose a loved one and still must worry about healthcare coverage which is why extending health care coverage, tuition benefits, tax relief, and housing assistance is so important. As a Town Council member, he understands how important volunteer firefighters are to the community.

**Travis Woodward, President, CSEA SEIU Local 2001:** Mr. Woodward is in support of the bill. He claims that requiring employers to notify employees of changes in management is a simple approach to creating consistency for workers. He adds that the bill helps reduce sudden job displacement, turnover, and loss of insurance and benefits. Mr. Woodward would also like the committee to consider making two changes; Include as a "Covered location," "A property of a carrier as defined in CT Gen Stat § 14-212 where employees are performing

student transportation or related activities.”; and Add "School transportation" to the definition of "Service worker".

**Ed Thibodeau, Connecticut Education Association:** Mr. Thibodeau is in support of the bill. He claims that the bill contains important safeguards that teachers lack. He states that in the current process The Board of Education’s administrators make the decision to terminate a teacher, however this is not a neutral party. He claims that this process is unfair, and many good teachers feel that their jobs are at stake because of it. In his ten years of experience, he has noticed that it is easier to fire a teacher than to suspend one.

**Arthur Quinn, Connecticut State Marshal:** In recent years, Mr. Quinn states that his job as a state marshal has become increasingly dangerous with the increase of threats while conducting his duties. He examples that in October of 2009 he was shot twice while attempting to take a subject into custody. He states that he fears the day he or one of his co-workers is not as lucky to survive, their family would be left without health insurance. For these reasons he supports the bill.

**Tiffani Nordgren, Registered Nurse, Backus Hospital:** Ms. Nordgren states that she has been a nurse for around four years, and she genuinely enjoys it. However there has been an instance where she was in a dangerous position as a patient. She explains that she was hurt in this altercation. She asks the committee to consider how they would react if this happened to one of their family members.

**Leslie Blatteau, President, New Haven Federation of Teachers:** Ms. Blatteau is in support of the bill. She notes that Section 2 of the bill of the is important because educators who are injured at work deserve full compensation. She also says that she is very supportive of Section 15 of the bill because it protects educators’ rights to bargain over payroll deductions. She claims that this is very important during the state's current political climate. She does have a concern regarding the bill. Section 34 of the bill is a study; she asks who will be recorded in situations where a person is not certified to work alongside certified professionals; and how can appropriate ratios of student to teachers be ensured so that students can be prioritized?

**Sara Bustamante, Registered Nurse, L+M Hospital in New London:** Ms. Bustamante speaks about an experience she had in November of 2025 where she was assaulted by a patient. This attack resulted in a head injury which caused her to be homebound for almost a month. While out of work she was paid through worker's compensation, however this does not cover her full paycheck. She states that Section 1 of the bill will provide paid leave for healthcare workers who have been assaulted. For these reasons Ms. Bustamante is in support of the bill.

**Dale Cunningham, Vice President, Lawrence & Memorial Registered Profession Nurses:** Ms. Cunningham is a recently retired nurse with over 30 years of experience and because of this she supports the bill. Throughout her experience as a nurse, she has been injured by attacks from patients and threatened. She describes an instance where she was thrown into a shower by a patient, she states that she was lucky not be injured. She also notes a recent instance at Lawrence & Memorial where a patient injured two members of the staff which were unable to return to work for weeks. She also adds that she has known of

serval people that have been injured, physically or mentally, and where unable to return to the job.

**John DeCarlo, Professor and Director, University of New Haven:** Mr. DeCarlo is a retired Police Chief with 34 years of experience as well as a college professor. He is in support of the bill because it provides free tuition at CT public colleges for eligible police officers, firefighters, and fire academy students. Along with requiring the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to work with higher education institutions to promote law enforcement professions. However, his concern with the bill is that by limiting the incentives to public institutions it might cause people to leave programs like his. He explains the UNH does many things to support first responders including tuition discounts. UNH also has professional development opportunities for first responders including trainings and special classes.

**Prince Gresham, SkyChefs worker, Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport in Arizona:** Mr. Gresham is in support of the bill because he understands the struggles of workers who have no protections against losing their jobs. He explains that the past six months have been very difficult for him and his co-workers when they were laid off. He says that the company he worked for did not hire anyone back at first causing him to file a grievance with the company before they rehired him. About a month ago he says that things went south again when his company was taken over by new management. He claims that he and his coworkers were sent letters saying that they would have to complete "onboarding steps" to keep their jobs along with potential changes in benefits and policies. He states that during this time he did not know how to get groceries or pay rent.

**Dave Hannon, President, CHCA District 1199, NUHCE, AFSCME, AFL-CIO:** Mr. Hannon is in support of the bill. He claims that current laws are not getting things done and this bill, specifically Section 1 fixes that. He states that Section 1 of the bill creates incentives for workers to report violence in the workplace, this will prevent future violence. Along with that it will require employers to cover medical costs and lost wages of workers, create a civil cause of action, and extend protections to every employee with patient contact.

**Keri Hoehne, Secretary Treasurer, UFCW Local 371:** Ms. Hoehne supports this bill and states that when adult-use of cannabis was first legalized its intention was to create a new industry with family sustaining jobs, these establishments now hire hundreds of workers in our state. When the minimum wage was increased a few years ago the companies refused to increase the wages of their employees because they receive tips. She states that these tips are received in a similar manner to how Panera or Starbucks employees receive their tips, however they are still paid minimum wage. She claims that in some cases the tips do not add up to minimum wage for most employees.

**Anthony Mangiafico, Wallingford Adult Education:** Submitted testimony is support of section 33 of HB 5003 that establishes a regional workforce navigator within each workforce development board. Lines 1630-1636 requires coordination with local Adult Education programs that are a primary entry point into Connecticut's workforce for low skilled, under skilled and English language learners. They state that the success of regional workforce navigators will depend on alignment with adult education. Mr. Mangiafico recommended that adult education should have a permanent statutory seat on workforce development boards.

Adult Education programs and American Jobs Centers should be co-located when possible and have shared or interoperable database systems.

**Marta Martell, Former SkyChefs worker in PHX, UNITE HERE Local 11:** Ms. Martell submitted testimony in support of Hb 5003. She states she worked in Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport in Arizona for two years as a porter and dishwasher. However, her and their coworkers' lives were thrown into turmoil when Skychefs lost a contract with American Airlines and was told 200 of the workers would be laid off. The new company GAT/SkyCafe refused to commit to rehiring them even though they had years of experience and provided excellent service. They along with their Union Unite Here, elected officials and their investors, pleaded with them to let them keep their jobs. Instead, Atlantic Street sold SkyCafe to a new company PrimeFlight that is owned by two private equity firms Sterling Group and Capital Meridian Partners. A confusing letter was sent saying to complete onboarding steps but gave no details or instructions. What they understood was that once again their job was at stake. She was able to get a job with PrimeFlights new subcontractor Aramark but only after filling a grievance with local 11 to get their job back with back pay. Many of her other coworkers were not so lucky. This bill will give workers like her 90 days of stability instead of panic when a new contractor takes over.

**Seema Pillai, DNP RN MBA NEA, BC NPD-BC:** Submitted testimony in support of HB 5003. They state that healthcare is one of the most violent professions that account for nearly 75% of all nonfatal workplace violence injuries from day-to-day work. The violence experienced increases burnout and high turnover. Section 1 ensures full salary after assault, protection from loss of accrued leave, coverage for medical expenses not reimbursed and access to civil remedies. Pillai explains that there are only fragmented internal reporting systems with no standardized mechanism to alert clinicians when a patient has a history of being violent. Section 3 addresses this by requiring the development of a reporting system within the statewide health information exchange. They state that this provision would be preventative not punitive. Section 6 addresses the issue that community-based care, hospice, and urgent services face. They state often there is limited parking for mobile clinicians and this section would allow for dismissal of parking citations when issued in the course of employment.

**Diedre Murch, Vice President, District 1199 NE:** Submitted testimony in support of Hb 5003. They state that in November of 2025 over 5,000 PCA paychecks were shorted or missing. It was only 4 months later that most of the unpaid workers got their checks. They state in 2024 GTI took over the PCA payroll contract and their annual profits increased to \$75 million. DSS has been unwilling to notify PCAs if their Consumers face Medicaid eligibility problems. They state that 5003 would help ensure there is transparency and communication around fiscal intermediary performance.

**Kim Sandor, Executive Director, CT Nurses Association:** Submitted testimony in support of HB 5003. They state Section 1 would require employers to pay the difference between workers compensation benefits and the employees regular wages without forcing them to use up their PTO. This would ensure nurses are not financially punished for being assaulted at work and support their healing. Sandor explains that section 3 requiring an internal chart flagging for patients with documented workplace violence incidents allows reporting to turn into prevention. It would alert staff, trigger safety protocols, and allow for additional security. They state section 6 is needed as home health nurses face risks that come from unfamiliar

environments, need to carry medical equipment and often work in high density areas. This would reduce transit time, decrease the risk of exposures, and enhance rapid exit capability.

**Shannon Marimon, Executive Director, ReadyCT:** Submitted testimony in support of sections of HB 5003. Sections 32, 34, and 35 align K-12 systems with high-growth, high demand workforce needs. They believe that these sections would reduce administrative burdens, streamline connections between schools and ensure industry alignment.

**Bree Sanca, VP of Behavioral Health, Elara Caring:** submitted testimony with support on certain sections of 5003. They state that the structure of any alert system must be carefully designed. They want any designation to have a process that is clinically sound and is applied consistently. Additionally, if implementation requires agencies to absorb new system costs without state investment, then that would be a significant financial strain. They explain that if implemented properly and with adequate funding a more integrated system of alerts could enhance worker safety efforts. Lastly, they explain that the affirmative defense provision related to parking violations is supported, as home nurses do not have assigned parking.

**Tiffani Nordgren, Registered Nurse, Backus Hospital:** Ms Nordgren submitted testimony in which she described when she was attacked by a patient and sent to the ER due to it. She asks the committee to think about if that was their wife, daughter, or sister and how it would have been to be receive the call that they were now in the ER after a patient attacked them.

**Haley Stafford, Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce:** Submitted testimony in support of sections 30-34 and opposition on section 38 of HB 5003. Stafford states that one of the greatest constraints throughout CT is workforce development. Employers consistently report difficulty filling in advanced manufacturing, health care, skilled trades, and STEM related fields. Employers often face barriers when attempting to establish internships or experiential learning opportunities, but this bill improved coordination between schools and industry will help address this. The educator's externship pilot program is a forward-thinking approach to workforce alignment. Stafford encourages careful consideration of any provisions that may increase regulatory or cost burdens on employers. They ask that section 38 be removed as adding a requirement to pay all employees wages when a business is closed would just compound the issues business are currently facing.

**Jennifer Widness, President, CT Conf of Ind Colleges:** Submitted testimony stating concerns with certain sections of HB 5003. She states the CCIC and member institutions support and encourage collaboration with DESPP they are concerned with the proposed tuition benefits being limited exclusively to public colleges. Ensuring DESPP engages institutions across sectors will strengthen statewide recruitment efforts and expand opportunities for prospective officers. Establishing tuition free pathway only at CSCU institutions risks shifting enrollment away from independent colleges when higher education is facing financial pressures. She urges the committee to retain the advanced DESPP collaboration provision while reconsidering the tuition free proposal in its current form.

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

**Michael W. Shea, Executive Director, Connecticut Airport Authority:** Mr. Shea is in opposition of the bill. He states while the CAA is supportive of the intent of the bill it believes

that it includes language that would impact the process of transitioning to a new service contractor at their airports. He explains that the bill will require the successor contractor to grant workers under the previous contractor employment for 90 days or more. This would limit the abilities of the successor contractor to take actions against employees for any types of violations. He claims that the CAA is concerned that the bill could make their airlines unattractive for airline and cargo growth because it could cause concessionaires and other private entities to shy away from investing in their airports. He wants to make it clear that they like the intention of the bill, but they feel there is an alternative way to go about it.

**Paul Amarone, Senior Policy Director, CBIA:** Mr. Amarone supports sections 30-34 but has significant concerns with the rest of the bill. They state that it would be a significant regulatory expansion which would lead to cost increases and operational inflexibility. In the case where a healthcare worker is injured in the workplace the employer would be required to continue full salary without charging accrued leave. The bill also authorizes private civil actions with attorney fees that would increase litigation risk and raise insurance costs. They state the expansion of the successor contract law in section 10 would be the most significant impact on the private sector. It would broaden coverage to numerous industries such as warehouses, residential complexes, hospitals, and schools while lowering the employee threshold to just two workers. The Successor contract would be required to retain the predecessor's workforce for 90 days and limits terminations to just cause. Civil penalties of \$500 per employee per day would also be imposed for violations. Mr. Amarone states this would increase business risk and discourage market entry.

Section 7 revises the cannabis labor peace agreement by conditioning license approval and continuation to compliance with it. The elimination of the employee size threshold in the employment promissory note of section 4 expands restriction to all employers and small businesses. Section 38 would mandate that if an employer closes due to inclement weather, they must pay their employees full wages and cannot be forced to use sick time, vacation time, or personal leave for it. Section 31 would give valuable data by surveying work-based learning programs while section 32's educator externship program would allow teachers to gain experience with private sector employers in the classroom. Section 33 enhances the responsiveness of the regional workforce development boards and section 34 requires the CT Education department to study the effectiveness of the charter school's co-instruction teaching models. Due to these reasons the CBIA urged for significant changes to the bill before it is moved forward.

**Kristina Baldwin, Vice President, APCIA, Eric George, President, Insurance Association of CT, and Sean McLaughlin, Regional Vice President, NAMIC:** Testimony was jointly submitted in Opposition of HB 5003 section 8. They state under the current Workers Compensation Act an employee seeking benefits must establish an injury or illness arose out of and in the course of employment. HB 5003 would broaden this standard by extending coverage to municipal and public works employees for injuries sustained while commuting to or from work. By expanding the statute to add additional employee groups it invites further expansion.

**CHA, Connecticut Hospital Association:** The CHA submitted testimony in opposition to HB 5003 section 1 and 3. Section 1 would expand the employer liability by creating an extraordinary exception the workers compensation framework by establishing unlimited benefits for workplace related assaults. Workplace related assaults is not clearly defined and would leave the proposal open to inconsistent interpretation. CHA also states that this would

result in a significant financial strain. Section 3 would require DPH to create a reporting system by which providers would be able to report incidents of patient violence in a patient's actual medical record. CHA believes DPH should study the feasibility, legality, and value of such a reporting system before implementation. They also state it likely would violate various sections of HIPAA and fails to include due process while having an increased risk of reputational harm.

**Betsy Gara, Executive Director, COST:** Submitted testimony in opposition to certain sections of the bill. They state section 8 expands workers compensation to public workers traveling to and from work that would undermine its balanced framework. It would increase compensation costs and place a greater burden on the towns and taxpayers. Section 11 of the bill requires municipalities participating in CT Partnership Plan to extend health insurance coverage to surviving families of volunteer firefighters for 5 years. If a municipality is not participating in the plan, it requires them to apply for coverage under the plan. They state this would be another unfunded mandate on municipalities. Sections 16-19 of the bill would provide tuition waivers and mortgage assistance as a tool to recruit and retain police and firefighters. They believe this would be powerful incentives to encourage people to pursue and remain in these careers.

**Jerry Cincotta:** Submitted testimony in opposition to HB 5003 as an omnibus bill deserves a more thorough vetting process. The bill would shift teacher termination away from elected school boards and into independent hearing officers.

**Tracy Wodatch, President and CEO, Healthcare at Home:** Submitted testimony with comments on certain sections of HB 5003. They state they oppose sections 1 and 3 as the ideas behind them need to be sustainable and consistent. Section 1 would duplicate existing state structures and create significant financial strain. Section 3 needs to have definitions such as history of violence clearly defined or risk inconsistent or unfair labeling. The system must rely on accurate up to date information and maintaining such a system would need state support. Wodatch states they support the language in section 6 establishing admirative defense for care at home workers.

**Michael Criss, First Selectman, Town Of Harwinton:** Submitted testimony in opposition to section 8 of HB 5003. Section 8 would amend the definition of compensable injuries under Connecticut General Statutes §31-275(1). The bill expands that definition to include departure from an employee's place of abode directly to duty, performance of duty, and the return directly to their place of abode after duty. Section 8 would also include coverage for employees of municipal works departments. They believe that by expanding the definition of compensable injuries this will increase claim exposure and impact municipal budgets.

**Zachary McKeown, Advocacy Manager, CCM:** Submitted testimony in opposition to several components of 5003. Mr. McKeown states that Hb 5003 collectively represents a suite of unfunded mandates that would destabilize municipal budgets and drive-up insurance costs. CCM states it is opposed to the portal-to-portal workers compensation as it would force municipalities to assume liability for injuries sustained during their private commutes. The employer has no control over road conditions, traffic safety or employee behavior. By overturning the coming and going doctrine that section would generate significant increase in claims for incidents unrelated to the actual job performance. CCM states continued insurance to a fire fighter, marshal, corrections officer family who has died in the line of duty is a logical

consideration, they ask that the committee consider the impact of the provision under section 11 to their host municipality. CCM explains Section 13 is required for payroll deduction provisions that are already managed through local employer-employee negotiations. CCM states this would be unnecessary state interference in local administrative matters. Mr. McKeown states they support the grant program for junior firefighter programs in section 39 as it would be a valuable recruitment tool.

**Patrice McCarthy, Executive Director, CAFE, and Fran Rabinowitz, Executive Director, CAPSS:** They submitted testimony in opposition on behalf of the boards of education and superintendents they represent. They state the bill would strip the Boards of their long standing decision making authority on who would be teaching the children enrolled in their schools. It would change a provision in the teacher tenure law that would make the unelected hearing officers make the final decision that would be binding to both parties. They state this would deprive the boards of education the ability to establish standards for teachers to remain in employment. The only recourse for a board of education would have on a bad decision would be to file an application to vacate an arbitration award. HB 5003 would change the provision permitting termination from other due and sufficient reasons to just cause standards of review. They state however that just cause is a standard regarding discipline in the world of industrial labor relations and would be inapt because some terminations are not disciplinary in nature.

**O. John Maduko, Chancellor, CSCU:** Submitted testimony with general comments in opposition to 5003. CSCU appreciated the language of the bill but a new statutory tuition waiver without a line-item appropriation would place a strain on institutional budgets. CSCU and its member institutions state they strongly support police officers and firefighters but enrolling new students under a statutory waiver will generate significant costs. They state there are costs for academic advising, student support services, technology infrastructure, financial aid administration, and facilities. Some costs are fixed while others scale with enrolment. From FY22 to FY26 the total cost of statutory fee waivers increased by \$3.8 million, rising to \$8.2 million to \$12.6 million.

**Mag Morelli, President, LeadingAge CT – RI:** Submitted testimony in opposition to SB 5003. Section 1 expands the employer's obligation when there is an assault on a health care worker. They state while it attempts to address a serious problem it would create significant legal and financial liability. The employee would also be entitled to medical expenses if they are not covered by the employees' health insurance or workers compensation. They are unclear if for example an injury was an exacerbation of a preexisting condition not all the treatment would be related to the workplace. They ask who would make the determinations for these new, obligatory payments by the employer. Subsection C provides for a private right of action but does not specify it has to be the employer, it could be civil actions against the assaulting patient. The current law bars common law actions against employers for workplace injuries and this would be a significant exception to the exclusivity of workers compensation. Section 3 requires DPH to create a system for flagging a patient who is violent against healthcare providers. They state there are many details of this proposed mandated process that need to be worked out before adopting it. Ms. Morelli stated that section 23 has some technical concerns and potential conflict with HIPAA regulations. They are concerned that this would require the employer to release recording when they do not have the legal authority to do so.

**Reported by: Lawrence Sanchez,  
Olivia Buczak, & Cameron Clarke**

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