

Labor and Public Employees Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5276 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT CONCERNING VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS AND THE
DEFINITION OF EMPLOYER UNDER THE STATE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Title: AND SAFETY ACT.

Vote Date: 3/5/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/24/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor & Public Employees Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The purpose of the bill is to ensure volunteer fire departments and ambulances are covered under CONN-OSHA. This is necessary as Federal OSHA has no jurisdiction over these volunteer organizations. The proponents of this bill claim that the lack of CONN-OSHA oversight of volunteer departments has resulted in several preventable deaths and accidents that could have been mitigated or avoided altogether with CONN-OSHA's involvement and training.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Danté Bartolomeo, Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Labor:

Commissioner Bartolomeo supports the bill because it clarifies CONN-OSHA's jurisdiction over the employee and employer relationship of volunteer fire departments and volunteer ambulance companies. She clarifies the bills importance because FED-OSHA currently does not have jurisdiction over them. She says that in the past few years the number of volunteer firefighters has declined, she believes the bill giving CONN-OSHA coverage over volunteer firefighters will stop this decrease. Ms. Bartolomeo added a few instances in which firefighters were injured and one instance in 2025 that resulted in a death while on the job. She stated that the lack of rules being followed is what contributed to their injuries and enforcement by CONN-OSHA could have prevented them.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

None provided.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, COST: Opposes the bill as it would add another layer of costly regulation. The CT Supreme Court held that private employers, including volunteer fire departments and ambulance companies are not subject to state OSHA laws. HB 5276 would overturn this decision and subject them to unnecessary regulation.

Stephen Harding, Senate Minority Leader, Senate Republican Office: Sen. Harding states this is another attempt by the DOL to place burdensome bureaucracy and unaffordable costs onto volunteer fire departments and volunteer ambulance companies. The volunteer departments this bill targets already fall under Federal OSHA and this legislation will make it increasingly difficult for them to operate.

Frank Ricci, Labor Fellow, Yankee Institute: Mr. Ricci opposes the bill as volunteer fire and EMS departments have been recognized by CT Supreme Court as private entities. Private entities fall under federal OSHA jurisdiction and this bill attempts to redefine these departments that would expand state OSHA authority. This would create the possibility of conflicting regulatory schemes and creates legal uncertainty. Mr. Ricci states this would add administrative costs and government instability. As volunteer participation is declining the legislature should remove barriers to service and ensure regulatory clarity.

Reported by: Olivia Buczak

Date: 03/16/2026