

# Labor and Public Employees Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** HB-5385 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT CONCERNING UNDUE DELAY IN WORKERS' COMPENSATION  
**Title:** CLAIMS BY POLICE OFFICERS AND FIREFIGHTERS.

**Vote Date:** 3/12/2026

**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 address concerns of unnecessary and prolonged delays when first responders seek workers' compensation. The bill would require the Workers' Compensation Commission to study these issue and provide recommended changes.

### SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

The substitute language, LCO 3060, changes the study to a task force, thus addressing some of the concerns of the Workers' Compensation Commission.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

**Stephen Morelli, Chairperson, Workers' Compensation Commission:** Submitted testimony stating that because of their responsibilities their Commission may not be the most appropriate agency to study and report on those matters. The bill would task WCC with studying administrative processing of claims, medical provider availability, and insurer authorization requirements. The WCC does not collect the data needed in the bill and does not have the resources needed for it. Employees are not required to report their occupation when filing a compensation claim so it would be difficult to determine if a claim was filed by a first responder. Administrating processing of many claims is handled by the employers' workers compensation insurer and not by the commission. The NCCI might be able to provide information for medical date on CT workers, but that info would only be for insurance companies registered with CID. Typically, first responders would not be included in the NCCI

data. They state that asking WCC to analyze insurer authorization practices would risk compromising their impartiality.

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

**Ed Hawthorne, President, Connecticut AFL-CIO:** Submitted testimony in support since the bill attempts to address challenges first responders may encounter. Workers' compensation should not be a bureaucratic nightmare for anyone, and the bill would require them to study undue delays in the system.

**Kim Novak, LCSW, Trauma Therapist:** Submitted testimony in support stating as a trauma therapist they work with first responders often. They state it is common for workers compensation to not pay authorized claims and they can be unpaid for up to a year. The denials can be for various reasons such as no HIPAA notes sent, or it can be denied mid treatment for no given reason. Appealing a decision would take even longer which can result in working 6-12 months without getting paid. They state this hurts private practice healthcare providers like themselves.

**Peter Brown, President, UPFFA of CT, Jeffrey Tomchik, Political Director, UPFFA:** Submitted testimony in support stating firefighters operate under extreme and dangerous conditions every day and CT is fortunate to have a robust Workers Compensations system. It ensures injured firefighters can focus on recovery rather than fear losing their employment. They however state that undue delay has become a major problem within the workers compensation treatment process. There are long delays in treatment approvals that sometimes result in worsening injuries. The delays result in the firefighter being out longer and states that firefighters injured should not be hindered by avoidable bureaucratic delay.

**Robin Hall, First Responder Psychologist, Private practice:** Submitted testimony in support explaining they are frequently asked by workers comp companies to conduct PTSD evaluations. They explain there needs to be a set timeline for claim review and that they have received clients who were sent to them several months to a year after submitting a claim. When someone gets PTSD they need immediate treatment or risk the condition being exacerbated.

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

**Kristina Baldwin, Vice President, APCIA, , Eric George, President, Insurance Association of CT, Sean McLaughlin, Regional Vice President, NAMIC:** Submitted testimony jointly in opposition stating recent review of the Compensation Review Board cases listed on CT Workers Compensation Commission website do not indicate there is undue delay but that the system is working as intended. They state that the workers compensation system is doing well with workers compensation rates consistently declining. This shows a competitive safe workplace that has resulted in lowered premium costs and reinvestment into the workforce. They explain that any change to workers compensation has to be made while taking into account its long-term stability and affordability.

**Zachary McKeown, Advocacy Manager, CCM:** Submitted testimony in opposition stating there is no anecdotal evidence of systemic employer misconduct. The existing delays are primarily linked to trouble obtaining medical documentation.

**Reported by: Lawrence Sanchez**

**Date: 3/25/2026**