

# Labor and Public Employees Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** SB-438 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

**Title:** AN ACT REGULATING SELF-CHECKOUT STATIONS IN GROCERY STORES.

**Vote Date:** 3/19/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/10/2026

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor & Public Employees Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

The reason for this bill is to limit the use of self-checkout, in order to decrease theft from retailers, and to shift some more of the burden of checkout off the customers. As self-checkout has increased in recent decades, more stores have experienced increased retail theft and decreased job opportunities. This bill would place certain requirements on the use of self-checkout, in order to let workers provide better oversight and support during the checkout process.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

**Dante Bartolomeo, Commissioner, CT Department of Labor:** Submitted testimony in opposition of SB 438 as it is currently written. Bartolomeo stated the bill would create new statutes to regulate self-checkout stations. They would have to have one manual checkout station for every two self-checkouts, one employee for every two self-checkout stations and to not operate more than 8 self-checkout stations at any time. An employee or customer who believes a grocery store is in violation of the bill would be able to file a complaint with CTDOL and CTDOL would have to investigate each complaint as well as notify the grocery stores of such allegations. The store would have thirty days to take corrective action and if they fail to do so they would be liable to CTDOL for a civil penalty based on a full day of wages using the highest wage for a retail clerk for each day the violation continues. CTDOL has concerns with the section allowing for any grocery store customer to file a complaint. This could result in an unusually large number of complaints which would be difficult to investigate in a prompt manner. Complaints to the Wage and Workplace Standards Division should be prioritized on seriousness not on mandated timelines.

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

**Jose Anaya, Organizing Director, UFCW Local 371, and Keri Hoehne and Secretary Treasurer, UFCW Local 371:** Submitted similar testimony in support stating they have worked in supermarkets all their life. They state self-checkouts are a way of retailers pushing the work onto consumers while taking away jobs from their employees. The pressure on an employee increase as they are responsible for eight or more machines. They could only watch as expensive items were stolen through self-checkouts as they were told not to stop thieves. The company did not care what was stolen due to the money they saved not having to pay humans. Each stolen item results in a loss of sales tax as well. This results in self-checkout not only hurting the state with people losing their jobs but also losing income on sales tax revenue.

**Jeremy Espinosa, Legislative Representative, UFCW, Ivan Shang, Business agent, UFCW local 919, and Gabriella Holmes, Business agent, UFCW local 919:** Submitted similar testimony in support stating their workers put food on the table for CT's working families. It is becoming increasing difficult to do so as grocery prices have risen 6.4% in the past 12 months. Retailers have said that theft is one reason that prices have risen with 895 million in revenue lost, which equates to 56.8 million in sales tax revenue for the state. Grocery stores think to solve this they just must increase prices hire more security, more cameras, or close stores in high loss areas. Espinosa states a better solution would be more employees to deter theft rather than more self-checkout stations. It is currently difficult for workers who often need to monitor eight more self-checkout stations while also checking ID's and answering customer questions. It makes it difficult for those overworked workers to monitor for theft.

**Ed Hawthorne, President, Connecticut AFL-CIO:** Submitted testimony in support stating stores have increased their reliance on self-checkouts. While they can be convenient in limited situations they have created problems for consumers. They shift the labor of scanning, bagging, and troubleshooting to the customers. This can be difficult for seniors, individuals with disabilities, or customers using WIC, SNAP or coupons and ultimately results in longer lines at the few manual checkout stations. Self-checkout lines increase the retail theft by about 65% which has cost retailers \$895 million. Despite this companies treat that lost as a cost of doing business rather than maintaining enough staff to meet customer needs and prevent theft. In 2022 the state lost \$56.8 million in sales tax revenue due to shoplifting. Hawthorne states by requiring one employee for every two self-checkouts, oversight and accountability can be had that would reduce theft. Capping self-checkout out stations at 8 is reasonable as it would not ban the technology or eliminate consumer choice. The bills enforcement mechanisms allow for both employees and customers to file complaints to ensure accountability.

**Jake Serafini, Organizer, UFCW Local 371:** Submitted testimony in support stating supermarkets have increasingly adopted self-checkout technology presenting it as a convenient option for shoppers. The rapid expansion of these machines has come as a cost for workers and customers alike. Serafini explains that limiting self-checkouts is important to protecting jobs and maintain efficient stores. Cashier positions serve as important entry level jobs for young workers and people seeking steady employment in their communities. Staffed checkout lanes also provide better customer service and don't malfunction like self-checkouts

often do. When too many machines are operating with only one employee responsible it is difficult to help several customers at once.

**Travis Woodward, President, CSEA SEIU Local 2001:** Submitted testimony in support stating self-checkout was introduced as a convenience but without proper staffing has created problems for workers that include increased theft, overburdened staff, and more unsafe interactions. They explain that SB 438 sets clear guardrails by limiting stores to eight self-checkout stations and requiring one staffed lane for every two self-checkouts. It allows consumers to lodge complaints through DCP to protect workers from retaliation and authorizes enforcement by the Attorney General. They ask that the committee considers expanding the bills standards to drug stores, limiting transactions to 15 items, and restricting self-checkout for age restricted or theft-sensitive items.

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

**Paul Amarone, Senior Policy Director-CBIA:** Submitted testimony in opposition as it would require grocery stores to offer one manual checkout station for every two self-checkouts ones. It would force them to only perform those duties, no others, and cap the total number of self-checkout stations at 8. They explain that the staffing ratios are unrealistic and would dramatically increase staffing requirements. The mandated ratio would also prevent stores from adjusting staffing levels to reflect customer flow. The bill would also limit customer choice as many shoppers prefer to use self-checkouts and the rigid staffing would likely increase wait times during busy periods. Amarone states that the enforcement mechanisms in the bill create additional legal exposure and would invite unnecessary litigation.

**Wayne Pesce, President, Connecticut Food Association:** Submitted testimony in opposition stating it would mandate staffing ratios and limit self-checkout stations. This would reduce the convenience for shoppers, increase the cost for retailers and consumers. Pesce explains that self-checkouts have been around for 25 years and employees are not losing their jobs because of it, rather they have been able to work new positions such as curbside pickup. They state the bill seems aimed at resolving a union negotiation through legislation rather than collective bargaining. By implementing the bill grocery prices would increase and reduce customer convenience.

**Tim Phelan, President, Ct Retail Network:** Submitted testimony in opposition stating self-checkout provides shoppers a speedy option for those with few items and does not replace staffed lanes. The bill would impose rigid operational mandates that are currently made by individual stores based on customer demand, staff layout, and staffing ability. Grocery stores already operate on thin margins and policies that restrict operational tools increase costs for stores and contribute to higher prices for consumers.

**Frank Ricci, Labor Fellow, Yankee Institute:** Submitted testimony in opposition stating it is a costly mandate on CT businesses that will raise prices for families. They state CT is an expensive state that faces high energy costs, heavy tax burdens and a regulatory climate that keeps expanding. SB 438 would require specific ratios for self-checkout regardless of the stores size, customer volume or time of day. This removes their operational flexibility and forces businesses to absorb higher payroll costs. When costs rise businesses may reduce

services, delay investments and may even close locations. Ricci explains automation is not about eliminating workers but is a response to economic conditions.

**Alton Blodgett:** Submitted testimony in opposition saying it is unnecessary government interference that would increase operating costs, reduce efficiency and drive-up consumer costs.

**John Chunis, Citizen and Taxpayer:** Submitted testimony in opposition stating that the bill would increase the cost of food and make it more difficult. The cost of the bill would be moved onto the consumers. Restricting the number of self-checkout stations will result in longer lines at manual checkout stations.

**Sebastian Colbert, Brenda Hamilton, and Mona Colwell, Intercessors for America:** Submitted similar testimony in opposition stating government should not tell a business how to operate. Businesses know what is best to keep their customers happy and stores have a good working model on the split between staffed and self-check outs already. They state over regulation leads to increased costs for business that then result increased costs for customers.

**Erin Murray:** Submitted testimony in opposition stating that for individuals with disabilities self-checkout is an important accessibility tool that supports independence. The ADA was enacted to ensure people with disabilities can participate in everyday activities. Murray states this includes being able to shop and manage transactions independently whenever possible. They are concerned that SB 438 may create barriers for individuals with disabilities by reducing accessibility. The staffing ratios and limits on self-checkouts may remove flexibility from business and lead them to reduce the number of self-checkout stations.

**Jessica Olander, President, CT River Valley Chamber:** Submitted testimony in opposition stating the bill requires a fixed ratio between manual and self-checkout stations, mandates staffing levels, and caps self-checkouts at eight. This would be a rigid operational one size fits all mandate that does not reflect the wide range of grocery store formats. Olander explains that grocery stores already operate on extremely thin profit margins while facing rising costs in labor, transportation, and energy. This bill would increase the operating costs and contribute to higher food prices. Self-checkouts allow employees to be reallocated to other important roles such as assisting customers, stocking shelves, and supporting curbside pickup services. Grocery stores must be able to respond to changing conditions and mandating staffing ratios would limit a stores ability to adapt in real time.

**Stephen Sack:** Submitted testimony in opposition stating the bill is overreaching and customers can choose to go to the line with a cashier if they want.

**Mike Santangelo, Anonymous 12, 13, 14, and 17:** Submitted testimony in opposition for reasons largely unrelated to the substance of the bill or stating it would increase government costs.

**Reported by: Lawrence Sanchez**

**Date: 3/30/2026**