

# Labor and Public Employees Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** SB-440 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING UNEMPLOYMENT FOR STRIKING WORKERS.

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

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

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

**File No.:**

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor & Public Employees Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

The reason for this bill is to ensure that workers on strike for more than two weeks consistently are able to receive unemployment benefits. Workers on strike are not presently eligible for unemployment, and this can lead to prolonged financial hardships while exercising their constitutionally protected right to strike.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None provided.

### NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

**Martin Looney, Senate President Pro Tem, SDO:** Submitted testimony in support stating that in recent years employees across the nation have exercised their right to organize and employers have not negotiated in good faith. A strike is not an easy decision and happens after weeks of failed negotiations. Strikers can face losing wages and retaliation when the strike ends. They state the legislation would lessen the economic impact workers face.

**Arthur Bell, Business Agent, Teamsters Local 671:** Submitted testimony in support stating construction work is seasonal and gives employers leverage at the bargaining table. A prolong strike in the middle of a project season can break a family. The bill would not give workers and advantage it would just remove a lever employers have been using for decades.

**Bryan Chong, Communications Organizer, Teamsters Local 671:** Submitted testimony in support stating union power declining has not produced job security. Companies that fail after

fighting their workers were typically already overleveraged. Asking workers to absorb all the risk while management decides how to allocate the reward is not economic law.

**Kate Dias, President, CEA:** Submitted testimony in support stating all workers deserve a meaningful voice in their workplace and CEA stands in solidarity with all workers in CT.

**Timothy Gabriele, Local 34, North Haven DTC:** Submitted testimony in support stating the bill would not equalize the power between workers and bosses but, it would allow workers to tilt the scales slightly back by not having to fear personal devastation in a strike. Strikes are not a desirable outcome for either side and occur when management refuse to bargain in good faith.

**Keri Hoehne, Secretary Treasurer, UFCW Local 371 and Jake Serafini, Organizer, UFCW Local 371:** Submitted testimony in support stating in 2019 Stop and Shop proposed reductions to healthcare and benefits. They were on strike for 11 days and believes that if workers had unemployment after 14 days, Stop and Shop would have thought differently about the contract and the strike would never have happened.

**Anthony LePore, Principal Officer, Teamsters Local 671:** Submitted testimony in support stating that after 14 days of sacrifice workers can access unemployment benefits to keep their families afloat. This would be a recognition that strikes serve a public good. They expose systemic abuses and produce reforms that benefit workers across entire industries. Unemployment insurance exists for workers when circumstance beyond their control arise. When an employer refuses to bargain in good faith that is a circumstance beyond their control.

**Sara Parker McKernan, Policy Advocate, New Haven Legal Assistance:** Submitted testimony in support stating the bill would help protect low wage workers rights. Low wage workers often fear retaliation if they speak out about work conditions and their clients don't have financial support systems. Unemployment compensation's purpose is to provide support to workers without pay checks and would be a lifeline for striking workers.

**T, Ryan:** Submitted testimony in support stating SB 440 is not a handout it would be a tool to help balance negotiations and keep CT as a place where hardworking, talented citizens flourish.

**Tonishia Signore, Policy Director, She Leads Justice:** Submitted testimony in support stating when worker go on strike it is not a decision made lightly. They are often the result of serious action or inaction by employers that create unsafe work environments. A strike vote is taken after months of bargaining where that may be the only option to resolve differences with the employer. They state the bill would encourage employers to negotiate in good faith or risk increasing their UI experience ratings. Other neighboring states of New York and New Jersey already have this law in effect and CT should follow their example.

**Andrew Yackel, Organizer, Teamsters Local 671:** Submitted testimony in support stating that missing two weeks of pay is a financial cliff where families can fall behind on their bills. After a 14 day waiting period striking workers will have a lifeline that allows them to exercise their rights. Strikes will not be encouraged as there is no evidence of this in New York and

New Jersey that have this law in effect. They state strikes are a last resort and asks legislators to override any potential veto from the governor.

**Val Zhukov, Business Agent, Teamsters Local 671:** Submitted testimony in support stating they have stood on picket lines and know the costs a strike has on working families. While they strike companies keep operating hoping they can starve out their workers. They explain no one chooses to strike, workers are forced into it by employers' greed. He asks that the legislature commit to overriding the Governor's veto if does so again.

**Michael Adams, Legislative Assistant, AFSCME Council:** Mr. Adams is in support of the bill. He claims that the decision to strike is not an easy one; it is usually made after multiple negotiations attempts. He adds that while on strike workers put their families in serious financial strain. Mr. Adams believes that this bill is a balanced approach because it ensures unemployment insurance would not immediately apply during a labor dispute. However, he believes that if a strike lasts longer than fourteen days then workers should have access to these benefits because they should not be forced into financial devastation due to their right to strike.

**Jose Anaya, Organizing Director, UFCW Local 371:** Mr. Anaya is in support of the bill. He believes that the extra support is important to striking workers.

**James Case, Member Lobbyist, CWA Local 1298:** Mr. Case is in support of the bill. He states that strikes happen when employees have no other option, and it causes a financial burden on employees when they make the decision to strike.

**Senate Democrats:** The Senate Democrats are in support of the bill. They state that striking is not an easy decision, and it is often used as a last resort. They claim that the tight labor market has shown why workers will choose to strike. They believe that the bill will provide needed benefits to striking workers. They add that it would align Connecticut with legislation in over states.

**Eric Downer, Business Agent, Teamsters Local 671:** Mr. Downer is in support of the bill. He states that in September of 2023 several bus drivers in Meriden went on strike against New Britain Transportation to fight for higher wages, paid holidays, and benefits. He adds that the Teamsters Union strike fund helped workers through the strike. He also states that in 2024 warehouse workers went on a strike that lasted months, and once again the Teamsters Union strike fund helped them through. However, Mr. Downer believes that unemployment is a necessary second layer to help employees through strikes. \

**Carol Gale, President, Hartford Federation of Teachers:** Ms. Gale is in support of the bill. She believes that workers do not voluntarily go on strike, so it is unfair that they are kept from accessing unemployment benefits. She believes that the bill promotes fair bargaining and good-faith negotiations because it allows workers to qualify for unemployment benefits after 14 consecutive days on strike which will be used as an incentive for employers to resolve disputes. She states that striking is not an easy decision that workers make due to the lack of pay. She adds that the bill ensures protections who feel they need to strike to fight for better working conditions.

**Ed Hawthorne, President, Connecticut AFL-CIO:** Mr. Hawthorne is in support of the bill. He claims that there are disparities between corporate profits and workers' wages which make it difficult for workers to strike. He believes that extending access to unemployment insurance will create a level playing field. He adds that other states such as New Jersey, Oregon and Washington have passed similar legislation. He claims that striking is never a choice of workers rather it is a last resort.

**Rochelle Palache, 32BJ SEIU:** Mr. Palache is in support of the bill. He believes that the intent of the bill is to promote good-faith negotiations and to support workers on strike. He adds that not providing employees with unemployment benefits incentivizes employers to prolong negotiations. He states that it is very important that the bill will only provide benefits to workers after two weeks of striking. He explains that New York and New Jersey have passed similar laws and they have not seen more workers go on strike.

**Dave Weidlich Jr, President, CWA 1298:** Mr. Weidlich is in support of the bill. He states that New York and New Jersey already have similar legislation. He explains that New York reduced 7 weeks to 2 weeks in 2020, which benefited thousands of CWA healthcare workers in Buffalo when they were on strike for 40 days. The strike led to a contract which created better staffing which benefited patients. He also explains that New Jersey has a wait time of 30 days, however they are considering shortening this. He claims that with this policy these states have better protections for workers.

**Travis Woodward, President, CWA Local 2001:** Mr. Woodward is in support of the bill. He believes that currently striking workers are unfairly blocked from unemployment benefits. He claims this reflects a misunderstanding of labor disputes, when most strikes happen from harmful workplace practices. He believes that the bill will promote fair bargaining, good-faith negotiation, and incentivizes employers to come to an agreement. He adds that the bill will protect workers who feel that they are forced to strike due to intolerable workplace conditions.

**Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT):** Ms. Zaccagnino is in support of the bill because she believes it will help support working class families while their family members are on strike. She adds that the bill will correct the notion that striking workers voluntarily left their work.

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

**Henri Martin, Senator, CGA:** Submitted testimony in opposition stating it would have a detrimental impact on CT job creators and consumers. They explain that the bill has been vetoed by the governor twice before. It would negatively affect the solvency of the unemployment trust fund. State law requires those collecting unemployment benefits to be actively seeking employment which strikes would not meet.

**Kristen Abrahamson, Executive Vice President, Mechanical Contractors Assn CT:** Submitted testimony in opposition stating the bill would have adverse effects on the state's Unemployment Trust Fund and would shift the balance by providing labor an unfair advantage. They state that the bill would subsidize strikes and lead to prolonged labor disputes.

**Paul Amarone, Senior Policy Director, CBIA:** Submitted testimony in opposition stating under current law employees who are unemployed due to a labor dispute are generally disqualified from receiving unemployment. The bill would remove this disqualification even though striking workers do not meet the unemployed through no fault of their own condition. Federal law requires you to be available for work, actively seeking work and able to work to receive benefits. DOL stated states cannot waive those federal requirements. If states are found to be out of compliance with federal law, then they could lose federal funding or federal unemployment tax credits. Amarone states that this bill would be subsidizing one side of the negotiation and that the Governor had already vetoed this bill twice before.

**Anonymous 12, 13, 14, 16:** Submitted testimony in opposition for reasons largely unrelated to the substance of the bill and stating it would increase government costs.

**Alton Blodgett, Mona Colwell, Intercessors for America, Brenda Hamilton, and Regina Thornton:** Submitted testimony in opposition stating unemployment benefits are meant to support workers who lose their job through no fault of their own.

**Michael Criss, First Selectman, Town of Harwinton:** Submitted testimony in opposition stating unemployment benefits are meant to support workers who lose their job through no fault of their own. They further state the bill would increase the costs of the unemployment insurance system and the employers will have higher taxes or increased administrative burdens.

**Jessica Olander, President, CT River Valley Chamber:** Submitted testimony in opposition as it would affect the state's economy. All businesses would be affected even if they are not organized since everyone pays into the UI trust fund. UI is intended to support those who are involuntarily unemployed. In a strike the employees make a choice to strike and are not actively seeking new employment.

**Michael Thompson, Executive Director, Mason Contractors Assn CT:** Submitted testimony in opposition stating the bill would adversely affect CT's UI benefits and shift the collective bargaining process in favor of one side. A business would be subsidizing their own strike and more frequent prolonged strike would occur. Individuals seeking UI benefits must be able to work, seeking work and out of work through no fault of their own, which does not apply to those who go on strike.

**Meri Wick, President, Connecticut Lodging Association:** Submitted testimony in opposition stating that the bill would change the purpose of the unemployment system that was intended to help those who lose their jobs through no fault of their own to those who are voluntarily participating in a strike. Employers fund UI through payroll tax and expanding UI in this way would be another financial burden. They state that strikes may be prolonged with the bill and uncertainty would be introduced into negotiations.

**Chris Bird, General Manager, Saybrook Point Resort & Marina:** Mr. Bird is in opposition of the bill. He states that expanding eligibility to include people participating in a strike would cause more strain on the system and lead to higher unemployment insurance costs for employers. He adds that additional financial burdens would make it more difficult for establishments like hotels and inns to manage expenses and continue investing in the

workforce. He explains that the intended purpose of the unemployment insurance program was to support individuals who lose their jobs through no fault of their own, however expanding the program could have unintended consequences for employers.

**Jerry Cincotta:** Mr. Cincotta is in opposition of the bill. He states that employees choose to use their ability to go on strike. He adds that taxpayer dollars should not go towards supporting these individuals.

**Al Cowan:** Mr. Cowan is in opposition of the bill. He states that unions should be the one taking care of their members not taxpayers. He adds that he has been on strike twice, that was his decision not that of the taxpayer.

**Andy Markowski, State Director, NFIB:** Mr. Markowski is in opposition of the bill. He states that the bill would fundamentally change the principle of the state's unemployment insurance system to include employees who voluntarily leave work as part of a strike. He adds that the bill has the potential for striking workers to receive unemployment benefits from the state while simultaneously receiving strike pay. He believes that this bill will create financial stability issues for the state. He notes that the legislation enacted in 2021 implemented reforms to stabilize Connecticut's unemployment insurance system, this bill could disrupt this.

**David Nevin:** Mr. Nevin opposes the bill because taxpayers should not pay for workers who voluntarily decide to strike.

**Ricci Frank, Labor Fellow, Yankee Institute:** Mr. Frank opposes the bill. He states that fundamentally alter the purpose of unemployment insurance in ways that risk prolonging strikes and increasing costs. He explains that unemployment was not intended to provide financial support during voluntary work stoppages. He explains that he has spent 28 years as a firefighter, including 16 years as a union officer; he understands that strikes have always required both sides to weigh real costs. He notes that supports of the bill have acknowledged that providing unemployment benefits during strikes would increase union leverage and encourage longer strikes. He adds that it will not only have economic disruption for employers and unions, but for consumers and taxpayers. Mr. Frank also points out that the bill places no limits on union strike funds which will allow striking workers to receive both strike pay and unemployment benefits. He adds that in 2025 Governor Lamont vetoed similar legislation over concerns about the unemployment trust fund and the purpose of the program.

**Mike Santangelo:** Mr. Santangelo opposes the bill for reasons unstated.

**Don Shubert, President, CCIA:** Mr. Shubert opposes the bill. He states that this bill will unbalance the negotiating positions of the parties during a strike. From experience he explains that labor strikes in the construction industry have short-term and long-term negative implications on both union employers and employees. He states that short term effects include delays on projects, while long term effects include employers being selective on union construction companies they allow to work on their projects. This not only affects companies but customers as well.

**Taxpayer:** Opposes the bill because unemployment is intended to be for workers who involuntarily get laid off from their job. They explain that striking workers make this decision

and therefore they should not qualify for these benefits. They add that striking workers already have strike benefits from their union.

**Reported by: Lawrence Sanchez & Olivia Buczak    Date: 3/30/2026**