

Testimony of the Connecticut AFL-CIO before the Labor and Public Employees Committee

September 28, 2015

Good Afternoon Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee.

I am Lori Pelletier and I serve as the Executive Secretary- Treasurer of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, here to testify on behalf of the 900 affiliated local unions who represent 200,000 working men and women from every city and town in our great state.

Throughout the recent economic downturn, the workers at the Department of Labor had the unprecedented task of servicing a high rate of unemployed and underemployed at job centers which are now slated for drastic reductions, closings, consolidations and privatization of services.

We are concerned that the Labor Department will be unable to meet its commitment to Connecticut's workers going forward.

The job centers are locations where unemployed or underemployed individuals can go search for a job or get help with a resume. Also among those services the department provides is the settling of disputes between newly laid off workers and their former employers about whether the former employees are entitled to collect unemployment benefits. The Labor Department uses adjudicators to settle those disputes. The adjudications division will be consolidated from seven to three locations, the appeals division will be consolidated from three to two locations, and the field audit staff will be consolidated from 12 locations down to five. A consolidation of call centers from two to one will no doubt cause extremely long delays for those that seek to start their unemployment benefit claim.

Though employment numbers have increased, a demand for services still exists for workers throughout Connecticut during a time that may be the worst in a workers life, the loss of a job. How ironic it is that these dedicated state employees, the women and men who help our citizens find not only jobs but the dignity that comes with being a productive member of our society, will now be in need of the services that they once provided.

We appreciate the committee holding this informational public hearing.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lori Pelletier

Executive Secretary Treasurer, Connecticut AFL-CIO