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**Testimony by Ronald McLellan, President
Connecticut Employees Union Independent (CEUI), SEIU Local 511
Transportation Committee Public Hearing
Hearing Date: February 04, 2013**

Testimony Regarding: HB 5250 An Act Concerning the Safety of Workers in Roadway Work Zones, HB 5549 An Act Concerning The Penalties for Endangerment of a Highway Worker, HB 5248 An Act Increasing Fines For Distracted Driving.

Good afternoon Mr. Chairmen and Members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Ron McLellan and I am the President of the Connecticut Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 511. We represent 5000 maintenance and service workers in the state of Connecticut. Over 1200 of our members are highway maintenance workers.

I am providing testimony today in support of these bills and out of great concern over the increasingly dangerous driving culture on Connecticut's highways. CEUI members have been sounding an alarm that action must be taken to get the attention of drivers that use electronic devices, travel at high speeds, and drive aggressively at the peril of other drivers and workers on our highways. This behavior endangers the lives of other motorists, stranded motorists, highway maintenance workers, tow truck drivers, emergency

responders, police officers, and firefighters. This behavior becomes even more dangerous in a highway work zone.

The injuries and deaths that result from distracted and/or aggressive driving have real impact on families. The loss of a loved one or a serious injury that causes lifelong pain and restriction are scars that never heal and can't be fully compensated.

In our Union, we know from experience what it is like to have a co-worker killed or injured. In our 40 plus year history we have lost seven (7) DOT members on the job. Many more workers have sustained serious injuries while doing their jobs.

The most recent and I hope the last worker to get killed on the job was Dan DiNardi on March 22, 2012. Not just a statistic. He was a son, a father, a brother, and a friend. His family and friends are always in our thoughts and prayers. You will receive written testimony today from his brother Fredrick DiNardi. I want to thank him and his family for their courage and commitment to these issues.

On December 12, 2012 several CEUI members gave testimony to the Transportation Committee. John Blanchard, a Service Patrol Driver, talked about the hazards they face in assisting the public on every shift they work.

Just two weeks after his testimony, he was rear ended on I-84 in the Waterbury area by a service van going full highway speed. He sustained neck and back injuries, while the van driver and passenger also sustained serious injuries.

Another issue that contributes to public disregard for work zones is the constant anti-government rhetoric. Some web, radio, TV and print media personnel continually beat the drum of a hate your government message for political reasons. We have a former governor in an afternoon radio slot inciting the public we serve by calling out multiple idle trucks in a work zone as a waste of taxpayer funds. He knows full well that they are there to protect the public and the workers. This messaging that workers on the road are just in your way and wasting your tax dollars is wrong and dangerous. A public relations and education plan is needed to change that perception back to the reality that we are just doing our jobs and providing a valuable service to the traveling public.

Every day our highway maintenance workers experience close calls and near misses that never get reported or make the news. You will receive written testimony today from CEUI members about the dangerous conditions they face every day.

We will never be able to prevent all accidents, however we can stop the reckless actions of people who believe that the flow of information on an electronic device is more important than the lives of others. We need a culture change similar to drunk driving. Thirty years ago many people would not think twice about drinking and driving. Due to enforcement and education the culture is much different today and we think before getting behind the wheel. It is that same stop and think moment that we need when it comes to responsible driving on our highways.

In addition to my testimony today, we have submitted a list of recommendations to your committee for review. An additional resource is the website **distraction.gov**, it has some great information and statistics on this issue.

On behalf of our members, I want to thank the chairs and committee members for their support- past, present, and future on these important issues. I will be happy to answer any questions.



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**Connecticut Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 511
Recommendations for Improving Connecticut Highway Safety
Presented to: Transportation Committee
Date: February 04, 2013**

1) Target distracted drivers

- Public education with a special emphasis on young drivers
- Enforcement of existing laws related to distracted driving
- Research other states for other effective laws and enforcement mechanisms

2) Enforce other current laws

- Focused enforcement related to the "Move Over Law"
- Enforce and charge violators who endanger, injure, or kill a worker in a work zone. (Law enacted in 2008 is never used)

3) Increase public awareness

- Better signage and use of electronic messaging boards
- Create a Media campaign focused on highway safety
- Take the pledge campaign (Young drivers and others pledge to not text while driving)
- Campaign directed towards Commercial Drivers
- Educate the public about why workers are on the road

4) Targeted enforcement

- Targeted enforcement in work zones (Big Orange) and every day enforcement
- Use a portion of infraction revenue to fund the ongoing enforcement and Big Orange program.
- Enforcement of commercial driving laws (weight limits and driving hours)

5) Research and implement national best practices for work zone safety

- Smart trailers (displays speed of vehicles)
- Improved lighting for night work