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**Transportation Committee**  
**February 28, 2020**

Senator Leone, Representative Lemar, and members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is Travis Woodward, I am an engineer with the Connecticut Department of Transportation and the president of the CSEA SEIU Local 2001 P-4 Council; a bargaining unit which includes our State's engineers, scientists, and information technology professionals.

I am here today to speak in favor of House Bill 5261 because it will ensure public safety and save taxpayer dollars. The front-line workers at the Connecticut Department of Transportation are dedicated professionals that put safety first and state employees consistently perform inspection work better, faster, and for less than outside consultants. By requiring that state employees perform the inspection work on transportation construction projects, we will not only be protecting lives, we will also be protecting Connecticut's financial resources.

Recent data provided by DOT indicate contracting out of Department services wastes between 56 and 63% in taxpayer dollars. Massive cost savings can be achieved if the work currently privatized by DOT is brought in-house. DOT's latest reports indicate savings in the range of \$100 Million annually. In November of 2017, Tennessee reported they had saved over \$54 Million since 2012 by reducing their reliance on outside contractors and prioritizing hiring of State engineers. This is a success story we can easily replicate in Connecticut.

One of the critical services our engineers provide is oversight and inspection of the construction of our roads and bridges. Our priorities are keeping the roads safe and contractors honest. When we do not have enough staff to perform these duties, our work is outsourced to high priced, for-profit companies, many of which are not even based in Connecticut. Having a no-bid contractor oversee a low-bid contractor is like having the fox guard the henhouse. When these construction contracts run over their allotted contract time, these private consulting engineers are rewarded with their own contract extensions.

As state employees we put public safety first, while these consultants put profits first. One example of this is FIGG engineers based in Florida. Last summer, OSHA released a report citing FIGG as responsible for the Florida International University pedestrian bridge collapse which killed 6 people. FIGG Engineers ignored abnormal cracking of the structure and put profits first. Why should this hit home? FIGG engineers have been awarded the oversight and inspection of the Arrigoni bridge reconstruction in Middletown, a project that began just yesterday, February 27<sup>th</sup>.

FIGG's checkered past does not begin with the FIU pedestrian bridge collapse. In 2012, a bridge span on the Jordan Bridge in Virginia that was assembled by FIGG collapsed. In October of last year, Texas DOT made the right call and removed FIGG from Corpus Christi's Harbor Bridge Project as a result of the NTSB's findings in Florida. Unfortunately, Connecticut DOT did not follow suit for the inspection of the Arrigoni Bridge reconstruction project.

We believe it is important to have highly trained engineers with the public's best interest at heart, and you are not going to get that by outsourcing to a company focused on profits. Help us end this practice of the fox watching the henhouse.

I would also like to speak in favor of HB 5198. As a construction inspector earlier in my career, the traffic cones on the highway were the thin orange line between life and death. With distracted driving becoming more and more invasive, action must be taken to remind the traveling public that they are driving through our office, and their caution will save lives.

Travis Woodward, P.E.  
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