



February 8, 2021

Chairman Porter, Chairman Kushner and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, my name is Brian Anderson. I am a legislative coordinator for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 30,000 public and private employees. **Council 4 supports:**

HB 6376 An Act Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair. It is wrong to discriminate against people because of their hairstyle. There are hairstyles that some people from statutorily protected classes prefer that may not fit the norm for the societal majority group. There have been some well publicized cases, such as that of a high school wrestler being forced to cut his hair at a match or forfeit a bout, that show the need for the protection provided by this bill.

H.B. 5158 An Act Concerning Breastfeeding in the Workplace. This bill is not just good for mothers and infants. It is a good bill for society. Many women working at low-income jobs do not have the ability to take sufficient time off to bond with their baby. Allowing these women time to breast feed or express milk for their baby will allow children to grow up both more physically and mentally healthy.

HB 6377 An Act Concerning Labor Peace Agreements and A Modern and Equitable Cannabis Workforce. All workers should have the right to organize into unions. This is a basic human right. Federal law does a poor job of protecting the rights of workers who seek to unionize. This bill gives common sense protection to workers.

HB 6378 An Act Codifying Prevailing Wage Contract. Connecticut construction workers are under particular economic stress now. Some construction trade locals are experiencing unemployment rates that are as high as 50%.

Connecticut needs to maintain a trained and professional force of construction trades people. Codifying the federal prevailing rate, determined by the market, does so.

HB 6381 An Act Establishing a Task Force Regarding the State Workforce and Retiring Employees. Connecticut faces a difficult problem in that up to 13,000 state employees have an incentive to retire prior to July 1, 2022 (as reported by the CT Office of Legislative Research). This could cause a loss of as much as 25% of some classes of essential workers such as corrections officers, child services social workers and state police officers. It makes sense for the state to thoroughly study the impact of this “silver wave” and what can be done to prevent a disruption of state services.

HB 6382 An Act Strengthening the Probate Court System. Probate court workers should have the right to unionize. There is no policy reason for them to be denied this right. A few years ago Council 4 assisted some of these workers in trying to pass a bill to allow them to unionize. Some of them were fired for trying to pass such a bill. That alone shows the need for a law to protect probate court workers in their attempt to exercise the basic human right of organizing into a union.