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United for Quality Care

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SEIU 1199NE
Before the Labor and
Public Employees Committee

The New England Healthcare Employees Union District 1199 represents 26,000 healthcare workers in public and private settings across the state. Today we are supporting a number of bills on the agenda that, if passed, will bring the most basic of rights to Connecticut's workers.

In Support of **HB 6383: AN ACT CONCERNING CALL CENTERS AND NOTICE OF CLOSURES**

This bill would create much needed protections for call center employees against the unethical practices of call center employers. Currently, call center employers routinely close large portions of a particular facility without giving their employees any notice, leaving those employed there scrambling to find new employment to stay on their feet. This can result in any number of hardships, including losing their home or having to go on state assistance in order to put food on the table. In addition, when a call center closes and moves to a different state or even a different country, those are much needed jobs leaving Connecticut. HB 6383 would discourage call center employers from closing in Connecticut by creating a process that call center employers are held to when attempting to close a facility, while also creating an enforcement mechanism to ensure compliance. Please pass this bill to protect call center employees from unethical closings.

In Support of **HB 6382: AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE PROBATE COURT SYSTEM**

HB 6382 extends bargaining rights to probate court employees who have been left out of laws allowing them to bargain because they are not been classified as state employees. These workers in many cases are at-will employees who are significantly underpaid compared with their counterparts in the Judicial Branch. The right to organize would provide these workers with a voice on the job; and it would even the playing field when it comes to wages, benefits and working standards. Passing HB 5274 would give them a voice when it comes to their jobs and working conditions. District 1199 supports this legislation.

In Support of **HB 6381: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE REGARDING THE STATE WORKFORCE AND RETIRING EMPLOYEES**

Connecticut state government is facing a reckoning in the next year, when as many as 15,000 state employees would be eligible for and have an incentive to retire prior to July 1, 2022. This could result in a loss of as much as 25% of some classes of essential workers such as direct care mental health workers, child services social workers and inmate medical workers. With their retirement will come a huge loss of institutional knowledge, and experience. District 1199 members know that this will only exacerbate the staffing problems that they are already feeling. Currently, we are down 1,000 positions in the agencies where we represent workers. Can you imagine what another 14,000 would do?

Thoroughly studying the impact of this loss is the responsible thing to do to prevent a disruption of state services. HB 6381 would convene a task force of stakeholders to make recommendations on succession planning and identify the barriers – including the many racial barriers - that are currently hampering the ability to recruit the next generation of managerial workers. We support this bill and encourage the Committee to pass it.

In Support of **HB 6376: AN ACT CREATING A RESPECTFUL AND OPEN WORLD FOR NATURAL HAIR**

HB 6376 is a bill that should've been passed many years ago and takes another step towards racial equity. In addition, adding this protection to the law will close the door on racial and discriminatory practices from employers that are often disguised as “professional.” By advancing the acceptance of protective hairstyles within workforce, this bill will draw attention to cultural and racial sensitivity in the workplace. Ultimately this bill aims to reform the Eurocentric image of professionalism in order to ensure and protect diversity in the workplace. California, New York and New Jersey have already passed CROWN Acts and dozens of other states are considering similar legislation. We urge the Committee to support this bill.

Thank you for your time.