

Labor and Public Employees Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-314

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING PROTECTION OF WAREHOUSE WORKERS.

Vote Date: 3/24/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/8/2022

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor and Public Employees Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

S.B. 314 will protect warehouse workers by ensuring that warehouse workers cannot be taken advantage of by their employer, who are setting expectations higher than practically achievable. The workers are required to be notified of each quota the employee is expected to fulfill, as well as the discipline that may be instated if the employee fails to meet such quota. This process will encourage employer-employee transparency, and detail what is expected from the worker before the worker finds themselves being reprimanded or disciplined for ambiguous quotas. This bill considers meal periods and time to utilize bathroom facilities, breaks during the workday that are regulated and protected by this bill.

The substitute language for this bill will incorporate more terms and definitions in Section 1, Section 2 discusses enforcement mechanisms and appropriate disciplinary measures, and Section 3 discusses the steps an employee can take when they feel their rights have been violated by unreasonable quotas.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Labor, Dante Bartolomeo, opposes the bill because it would necessitate a significant amount of state funding for CTDOL to administer effectively. Additionally, the hearings that the Labor Commissioner would need to hold upon receipt of complaint would need more state funding. Outreach to employers and employees to educate them about this bill would require even more funding.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

President Pro Tempore, Senator of the Connecticut General Assembly, Martin M. Looney, supports the bill. It will provide much needed support and protection for warehouse workers. This bill will additionally protect the workers who raise issues regarding the quotas given to them and will ultimately protect the workers who put their lives on the line to help us all get through the pandemic.

President of CT AFL-CIO, Ed Hawthorne, supports the bill because corporations should not be allowed to put profits over people. The legislation will protect warehouse workers from further mistreatment and abuse, perpetuated by the COVID-19 Pandemic demand for fast transportation of goods.

District Director and Vice President of Service Employees International Union, Rochelle Palache, supports the bill. With the rise of e-commerce, there has been increased pressures on warehouse employees to move products as fast as possible, leading to employers skipping meals and bathroom breaks. Palache encourages support to protect the dignity of the workers.

Service Employees International Union Member, Stacey Zimmerman, supports the bill because this legislation will keep employers safe and fed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Vice President of Public Policy for Connecticut Business and Industry Association, Eric Gjede, opposes the bill. Employee performance metrics are necessary and common, and it is a misperception to believe employers are using the metrics to discipline and terminate employees. The bill imposes restrictions on the warehouse industry based on a misunderstanding of the logistical necessity of workplace metrics. It would create far more safety issues for employees than it seeks to correct.

Connecticut Food Association, Wayne Pesce, opposes the bill because the bill imposes restrictions on the food supply chain based on a misunderstanding of the logistical necessity of current workplace metrics.

President of Connecticut Retail Merchants Association, Timothy Phelan, opposes the bill. Connecticut's workplaces are among the safest in the nation, and when complaints arise, there are ways to solve the problems. This bill could slow the process of bringing jobs to Connecticut to reinvigorate the state's economy and do more harm than good in the long run.

President of Motor Transport Association of Connecticut, Joe Sculley, opposes the bill because he feels as though employers shouldn't need to create quotas just to comply with the bill. He also believes that if an employee believes they were forced to violate OSHA, they can personally file a complaint, and it should not fall on the shoulders of the employer. Sculley states that former employees shouldn't have the right to access the employer's confidential information. The bill will create more problems than it solves.

Reported by: Molly Lukiwsky

Date: 4/1/2022