

Labor and Public Employees Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5264

AN ACT CONCERNING VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS AND
AMBULANCE COMPANIES AND THE DEFINITION OF EMPLOYER UNDER

Title: THE STATE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ACT.

Vote Date: 3/7/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/27/2024

File No.: 57

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill defines the meaning of employer under CONN-OSHA and will place volunteer fire departments and ambulance companies under the jurisdiction of CONN-OSHA. This bill follows complaints about volunteer fire department that CONN-OSHA was having difficulty investigating due to questions over their jurisdiction. This bill is intended to ensure the safety of volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers by making sure working conditions and equipment are safe.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Danté Bartolomeo, Commissioner, CT Department of Labor Bartolomeo voices his support of the bill as it clarifies CONN-OSHA's jurisdiction over volunteer fire departments. Over the past eight years there have been 37 complaints regarding volunteer fire departments of which 29 were inspected and 69 violations were issued. Additional complaints were never inspected because of questions of whether CONN-OSHA had jurisdiction over the department. Bartolomeo believes that it is vital for CONN-OSHA to have jurisdiction over volunteer fire departments to ensure that all equipment is functioning, and procedures are followed to keep volunteers safe.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

No testimony was offered in support.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Todd Carusillo, First Selectman, Town of Goshen: Carusillo is in opposition because the bill disregards the CT Supreme court's decision that concluded that volunteer fire departments and ambulance companies, as private employers, do not fall under the jurisdiction of Connecticut's OSHA. Additionally, Carusillo believes that the bill will add unnecessary bureaucracy and cost on volunteer fire departments and ambulance companies.

Tina R. Falck, First Selectman, Town of Griswold Falck is in opposition because the bill disregards the CT Supreme court's decision that concluded that volunteer fire departments and ambulance companies, as private employers, do not fall under the jurisdiction of Connecticut's OSHA. Additionally, Falck believes that the bill will add unnecessary bureaucracy and cost on volunteer fire departments and ambulance companies.

Christopher Lippke, First Selectman, Town of Canterbury: Lippke is in opposition because the bill disregards the CT Supreme court's decision that concluded that volunteer fire departments and ambulance companies, as private employers, do not fall under the jurisdiction of Connecticut's OSHA. Additionally, Lippke believes that the bill will add unnecessary bureaucracy and cost on volunteer fire departments and ambulance companies.

Deborah Richards, First Selectman, Town of Eastford: Richards: is in opposition because the bill disregards the CT Supreme court's decision that concluded that volunteer fire departments and ambulance companies, as private employers, do not fall under the jurisdiction of Connecticut's OSHA. Additionally, Richard believes that the bill will add unnecessary bureaucracy and cost on volunteer fire departments and ambulance companies.

Peter Grusauskas, Former Fire Chief, Goshen Fire Company: Grusauskas is in opposition because he believes that under the federal guidelines volunteer fire department have been safer than their counterparts. Grusauskas believes that volunteer fire departments have sufficient oversight and believes that this bill is an overstep. Grusauskas is also concerned with the vagueness of the definition of volunteer fire department and ambulance services and who will be covered by the bill, and CONN-OSHA should focus on other industries that have worse tack records than they do. Grusauskas believes this is an overstep that will damage already difficult to run departments who have little ability to pay fines and will have further difficulty recruiting volunteers.

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns: Gara is opposed to the bill because according to the CT supreme court volunteer fire departments and ambulance companies fall under federal OSHA laws, not state OSHA laws. Additionally, Gara is concerned that these entities are already having difficulty keep service and adding extra cost and bureaucracy could further hurt them and ultimately public safety.

Anonymous, Lifetime Member, Goshen Fire Department: is highly opposed to this bill

Jim O'Leary: O'Leary voices his opposition because it would impose an unfunded mandate

Patrick Lucas: Lucas is in opposition because the bill disregards the CT Supreme court's decision that concluded that volunteer fire departments and ambulance companies, as private employers, do not fall under the jurisdiction of Connecticut's OSHA. Additionally, Lucas believes that the bill will add unnecessary bureaucracy and cost on volunteer fire departments and ambulance companies.

Reported by: Jason Snukis & Noah Gulla

Date: March 15, 2024