

Labor and Public Employees Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-328

AN ACT CONCERNING PERMANENT PARTIAL DISABILITY BENEFITS AND

Title: PENSION OFFSETS.

Vote Date: 3/19/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/5/2024

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor & Public Employees Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would stop municipalities from deducting disability benefits from pensions. This bill is intended to allow people who have retired because of injuries to receive permanent partial disability without it coming out of their pensions.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Offered

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Peter Brown, President, Uniformed Professional Fire Fighters of Connecticut: Brown voices his support of the bill citing a belief that firefighters who put their lives on the line and are forced into an early retirement should not be financial punished for doing so. Currently disability payments are deducted from pensions penalizing these firefighters and not considering their unique situations. Brown believes that the current system unfairly punishes workers who work in dangerous professions and that these workers should be redefined to allow them to collect their full PPD award while also receiving their bargained for retirement benefits.

Ed Hawthorne, President, AFL-CIO: Hawthorne voices his support of the bill citing a belief that disability should not result in reduced pensions.

Zak Leavy, Legislative Director, AFSCME Council 4: Leavy on behalf of Council 4 voices his support of the bill citing a belief that it is unfair to reduce the pensions of workers who were injured on the job.

Jeffrey Tomchik, Director of Legislative Affairs, UPFFA: Tomchik testified in general support of the bill, and stated that when pensions are decreased as a result of a permanent partial disability, it is construed as punitive to workers who are disabled. He stated that permanent partial disability is not a supplement to salary or wages.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Zachary McKeown, Advocacy Manager, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities: McKeown on behalf of CCM voices his opposition to the bill describing it as an unfunded mandate that costs are "incalculable and volatile." The CCM is concerned that this bill could create a situation where injured employees are paid more when not working. The current system was collectively bargained between municipalities and employees and the CCM believes that bargaining shouldn't be undercut by legislation. The CCM is concerned that this bill could stack benefits and create negative fiscal impacts on municipalities and thus does not support the bill as currently written.

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns: Gara on behalf of COST voices her opposition to the bill citing the large cost to municipalities, calling it an unfunded mandate. COST believes that this bill would disincentivize people from returning to work as they may get paid more from workers comp and additional discretionary benefits than if they were working. COST is also concerned about legislation overriding collectively bargained benefits and thus is in opposition of the bill.

Reported by: Noah Gulla

Date: 3/26/2024