



DATE: March 8, 2022  
TO: Labor & Public Employees Committee  
FROM: Jeff Shaw, Senior Public Policy Advisor, The Alliance  
RE: S.B. 321, An Act Expanding Workers' Compensation Coverage for Post-Traumatic Stress Injuries for All Employees

Good afternoon, Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, Senator Sampson, Representative Arora and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

My name is Jeff Shaw, Senior Public Policy Advisor, of the Connecticut Community Nonprofit Alliance (The Alliance). The Alliance is the statewide advocacy organization representing the nonprofit sector. Community nonprofits provide essential services to over half a million individuals and families in Connecticut every year and employ 115,000 Connecticut workers, improving the quality of life in communities across the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on S.B. 321, An Act Expanding Workers' Compensation Coverage for Post-Traumatic Stress Injuries for All Employees. The proposed bill would expand the number of traumatic events that would qualify for worker's compensation coverage for post-traumatic stress injuries.

While we understand the good intentions of expanding qualifying events to access workers compensation, we are concerned the impact of doing so during a nonprofit workforce crisis may exacerbate the staff shortage. While any post-traumatic stress injury needs to be addressed professionally, community nonprofits are already understaffed. According to a survey The Alliance released in January, nearly one in five (18%) nonprofit jobs are unfilled across Connecticut. Staff are leaving for higher paying jobs in private industry and private practice, where they can deliver services remotely from their homes, and other industries are hiring clinical staff away from community-based nonprofit providers.

The urgent need to back-fill additional positions for staffing vacancies due to workers compensation, is impractical – and probably unaffordable – for many nonprofit providers. The workforce shortage is already threatening service delivery; managing current services with even fewer employees is unfathomable for many organizations.

We are also concerned the proposal may raise the cost of workers compensation insurance to levels that nonprofits could not afford. If it were to pass, the legislature should insure that state contract amounts for nonprofits that provide community services on behalf of the State are adjusted to build in protections and ensure resources are available to cover increased costs. State contracts do not automatically adjust to increasing in costs, such as minimum wage increases, health insurance premiums, fuel costs, or in this case, workers compensation.

Community nonprofits contract with the State to provide services; they cannot raise taxes or increase prices in the face of increased costs, meaning they are forced to cut services, lay-off employees or close programs if they are forced to incur increased costs without increased funding. Nonprofits want to provide excellent benefits for their employees, including workers compensation should they meet a qualifying event, but the State needs to make sure there are reasonable ways to pay for it.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.