



## **Testimony in Support of Proposed H.B. No. 5464**

**Submitted by Frank Ricci, Labor Fellow**

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My name is Frank Ricci and I serve as Yankee Institute's Labor Fellow. Yankee Institute is a policy organization dedicated to empowering Connecticut's people to forge a brighter future for themselves and their families.

I retired as a Battalion Chief after a 28-year career as a firefighter, with 22 of those years serving in the city of New Haven. I spent 16 of those years as a union official — serving as an executive board member, vice president and then retiring after winning two terms as president.

Throughout my career, I have witnessed managers and employees escape accountability for alleged offenses ranging from theft to sexual harassment by retiring or resigning before investigations could be completed. Just as disturbing is when management elects to discontinue an investigation after the alleged perpetrator retired to escape public scrutiny.

Burying of discipline, backroom deals settling cases away from public view and stopping investigations before completion has had a pernicious effect on our public organizations. That is why Yankee Institute supports Bill H.B. No. 5464, which seeks “[to] inform other municipalities and states of accused wrongdoing of a state or municipal employee that resigned before finality of the complaint against them.”

Yankee Institute recommends additional provisions to strengthen this legislation and provide additional transparency and accountability.

First, taxpayers should have the right to access, read and understand all agreements that are being executed in their name. Unfortunately, collective bargaining agreements are

sometimes given other titles (“stipulated agreement” or “memorandum of understanding” or “grievance settlement”) to thwart the public’s legitimate discovery rights. In other cases, there isn’t widespread awareness of the adjudication of an issue or investigation.

As the state workforce’s ultimate employers, the people of Connecticut have a right to know how disciplinary issues arising among state and municipal workers are being investigated or resolved. For this reason, whenever supervisors render discipline beyond a verbal warning, the document should be posted within 72 hours on the state or municipality’s web site.

Second, a requirement to complete any started investigation and post finding should be a requirement that covers both management and labor. This would end this game of cat-and-mouse. In addition, whenever a state or municipal employee or manager is placed on administrative leave, a short, written explanation should be posted online within 72 hours to inform the public about the reason for that judgment.

H.B. No. 5464 can pull back the veil of secrecy that protects managers and employees who abuse their positions and the public trust. Providing critical information to state and municipalities that an investigation is still ongoing when an employee is seeking to avoid accountability for their alleged actions is nothing more than common sense public policy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testify before this distinguished committee.

*Frank Ricci*  
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