



Testimony of
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Judiciary Committee
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HB 5473 An Act Concerning Captive Audience Meetings

Good afternoon Senator Doyle, Senator Kissel, Representative Tong and member of the Judiciary Committee. My name is John Brady and I am the Executive Vice President of AFT Connecticut, a diverse state federation of more than 30,000 public and private sector employees; which includes state workers, healthcare workers, public school teachers, paraeducators, and higher education faculty and staff in the Community College system and UConn

I come to you today in support of **HB 5473 An Act Concerning Captive Audience Meetings**.

As someone who was involved in a union organizing drive at my own hospital, I speak from personal experience how intimidating a captive audience meeting can be. Management will say that captive audience meetings are only an attempt to inform employees of their rights, but nothing could be further from the truth. Management holds all the power in the employee-employer relationship. Failure to comply with an employer directive means discipline, discharge, and loss of income and security, not only for the employee, but also for the employee's family.

If the meeting were truly an attempt to educate and inform employees, there would be no reason that the meeting be mandatory to attend.

I faced several of these meetings, usually one on one, in our organizing drive. Each meeting required me to debrief with my union organizer afterwards, much as I would do with colleagues after traumatic case in the emergency room. The emotional strain was much the same. In fact, that is the desired effect, to intimidate workers.

My worst meeting involved not one, but two managers cornering me in a 10-foot by 10-foot supply closet while they took turns berating me for doing "union work" instead of my nursing work and saying that my fellow nurses were complaining. The managers blocked my access to the door and I had my back up against the wall. At one point, an employee opened the door to access supplies, but quickly retreated and closed the door. He told me later that "you could have cut the air with a knife." This experience shook me for some time to come. Even after debriefing with my organizer, it was several weeks before I felt comfortable entering that supply closet again.

No one should go through what I did. No one should have their constitutional rights to organize jeopardized in such a way. This bill would correct this horrible practice and protect workers' rights.

I urge you to support and pass HB 5473.
Thank you.