



**CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 24, 2017

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Public Service Workers Converge on the Capitol to Protect Rights
Rally draws thousands from around Connecticut

HARTFORD, Conn., (March 24, 2017) – With chants of “Vote Them Out” and “We Will Fight,” nearly 1,500 public sector workers took over Minuteman Park in front of the Legislative Office Building Friday to stand against a plethora of bills being heard by the legislature that attack their rights and benefits.

Of the 96 bills heard in the Appropriations Committee, 77 of them directly stand to undermine health care, pension, and collective bargaining rights of employees.

“I just went through a six-month battle with cancer,” corrections officer and vice president of AFSCME 391 David Caron said in front of the committee. “If those copays had gone up I don’t know how I’d have survived cancer, let alone manage to support my wife and three daughters.”

Caron’s fears were shared by many: from police and corrections officers to teachers and paraeducators to scientists and university professors, public sector workers tired of being public punching bags gathered from across Connecticut to resist these policies, which have been unfolding in other states across the nation.

Throughout the day, hundreds of public sector workers and union members cycled through the Capitol, amplifying their message so it would be heard loud and clear by lawmakers: Connecticut is shrouded with the highest income inequality in the country and these bills threaten to set the state on a path to an even greater divide.

“They’re not going after the people who make over \$500,000 or the billionaires or the corporate elite,” Caron noted. “They’re going after us - the working and middle class - who get taxed the highest and are left to shoulder the burden.”

Despite clouded skies overhead during the rally, the path forward was crystal clear for Shellye Davis, paraeducator and Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals AFT Local 2221 co-president.

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“It is time once more to rise up; to reverse the decline of the middle class and to resist the special interests that have rigged our economy,” she told the crowd at Minuteman Park. “Organizing more women and men into our movement must be our biggest priority after we defeat this offensive legislation that threatens a voice for all working people.”

Also on Friday, a press conference held by faith leaders and the D.U.E. Justice Coalition addressed the immorality of legislation that puts workers’ families, health and wellbeing lives at risk.

“I believe that working people should be able to buy a house, afford healthcare, and send their children to college,” Central Connecticut State University student Brian Becker said, speaking at the press conference. “Cutting funding for vital public services, slashing wages and undermining the rights to bargain collectively will not help workers. Our answers won’t be found in budget cuts or a race to the bottom. We should empower Connecticut’s workforce, not undermine it.”

While the bills heard Friday attack public sector workers, other bills coming from legislators who seem beholden to special interest seek to cut the minimum wage, attack workers – both public and private – and further marginalize women, immigrants and public education.

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