



# Connecticut AFL-CIO

## FACT SHEET #7

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### H.B. 5037 AAC Workers Compensation Coverage for Certain Occupational Diseases For Emergency Services Personnel

This legislation would establish a presumption so that when state and local police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians contract communicable diseases, such as hepatitis, meningococcal meningitis or tuberculosis, it is presumed they were exposed to these diseases in the course of their work as emergency responders.

By the nature of their jobs, state and local police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians **must put victims' safety and health before their own.**

All state and local police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians respond to emergency incidents where **blood and other bodily fluids are present** and uncontrolled.

Automobile accidents, respiratory diseases, victims of violence, childbirth, fire calls, sporting accidents and numerous other cases of disease or injuries to individuals put state and local police officers, firefighters

and emergency medical technicians at risk of exposure to communicable diseases.

Use of universal precautions against the transmission of diseases for health professionals **cannot be relied upon** at an emergency scene where situations can change in an instant or sharp, uncontrollable scenes can cause a breach in protective clothing. All the correct planning and precautions are not enough to protect state and local police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians when lives are on the line.

Because of **privacy laws**, it is difficult if not impossible for state and local police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians to be informed that they have been exposed to a communicable disease. This makes it impossible to track an incident and prove a date and time of exposure.

#### Special points of interest:

- Emergency scenes are chaotic and dangerous where blood and other bodily fluids are present and uncontrolled.
- Universal precautions against the transmission of disease cannot be relied upon at emergency scenes.
- Privacy laws prevent the notification of emergency workers when they have been exposed to a communicable disease.