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**Testimony of
Larry Moquin, Field Supervisor, Local 668 LIUNA!, President, Vermont AFL-CIO & Vice
President, Vermont Building & Construction Trades Council
before the
House Committee General & Housing
on
Proposal 3
April 22, 2025**

Good morning Chair Mihaly and members of the committee.

My name is Larry Moquin and I am the Field Supervisor for Local 668 of the Laborers' International Union of North America. My local jurisdiction covers all of Vermont and a portion of New Hampshire. I also serve as the President of the Vermont AFL-CIO and Vice President of the Vermont Building & Construction Trades Council. I grew up in Winooski and my family has been in Vermont for five generations.

I am here on behalf of the VT AFL-CIO & VT Building Trades and our over 17,000 members supporting Proposal 3. We hope the committee will advance this proposal to the full house.

I would like to thank the committee for allowing me time to discuss the importance of passing Proposal 3. This amendment will protect our strong labor laws, Vermont workers, and the rights they currently enjoy for generations to come.

Vermont is a place where we care about each other. We help the underprivileged, the unrepresented, the uninsured, the underemployed and all people without a voice. We care about our children's education, reproductive freedoms, LGBTQ+ rights, the climate, our neighbors and being good to each other. Vermont is one of a kind and a lot of it has to do with the laws in place and the values of the people. Now, we can be the second state in the country to enshrine workers' rights into their constitution following Illinois which did so in 2022.

Proposal 3 is important because it would outlaw so-called "right to work" laws from ever being introduced in Vermont. Right to Work was an idea for a law that originated in the 1940s to try to maintain Jim Crow in the south. The idea was pushed by a corporate lobbyist named Vance Muse who was a known white supremacist, anti-Semite and anti-unionist from Texas. Muse and others claimed the CIO was sending labor organizers to the rural south to agitate a contented but gullible African American population and force white workers to join unions with black workers and call them "brother." This is not a Vermont value, but nine states have actually enshrined Right to Work

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into their constitutions: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Kansas, Mississippi, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Tennessee.

To show the impacts of Right to Work laws on workers in these states, I compared data about minimum wages, unemployment benefits, uninsured population, infant mortality rates, poverty rates and education ranks for these states with Vermont. I am not surprised by most of the findings, which I will summarize.

Minimum Wages- five of the nine states pay the federal minimum wage of 7.25 and eight of the nine have a minimum wage lower than Vermont.

Unemployment Benefits- nine out of nine states have a lesser benefit than Vermont with five of nine states benefit being \$320.00 or less per week, the lowest being \$235.00 per week. Four of nine states only allow 20 or less weeks of benefits, Florida being the worst allowing only 12 weeks.

Uninsured Population- Vermont has an uninsured population of 3.7%. Of the nine RTW states mentioned Nebraska has the lowest with 7.1% uninsured and Oklahoma has the highest with 13.8%. The eleven states with the highest uninsured populations all have RTW laws on the books.

Infant Mortality Rate- Vermont ranks #15 with an infant mortality rate of 4.89 percent. This statistic is up from 2023. The nine states we are comparing have rates from a low of 5.83% in Nebraska to a staggering high of 9.11% in Mississippi. These numbers are based on the number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births.

Poverty Rates- Nine out of nine states have higher poverty rates than Vermont. Vermont stands at 10.3% poverty rates while Nebraska has the lowest poverty rates of these nine at 10.8% and Mississippi again has the highest poverty rate at 19.4%

Most Educated States: Vermont currently ranks #2 nationally behind Massachusetts as the most educated state. Of the nine states Florida is the highest ranked at #21, with Kansas #23, Nebraska #24, Arizona #36, Tennessee #39, Alabama #45, Oklahoma #46, Arkansas #47 and Mississippi coming 49# only ahead of West Virginia, another RTW state.

Eight out of the top ten states with the highest workplace fatality rates are RTW. This statistic sheds light on the fact that when workers' rights and collective bargaining rights are attacked the consequences can be far worse than just the economic impact on the worker.

The Vermont Labor Movement hopes that this will pass your committee unanimously on its way to the full Senate. Our organization's membership, much like the state of Vermont, is made up of people from across the political spectrum. In many ways, Vermont is somewhat of a "conservative" state, in the traditional meaning of the word "conservative." We value our rights, and we value our freedoms. We believe that we all deserve the opportunity to succeed and to live our lives in the manner that we choose. The workplace is no different. Vermont workers deserve the right to organize and be protected when they choose to join to do so.

I was humbled and appreciative of the tri-partisan support of Proposal 3 last session. It is great that in the Green Mountain State legislators don't just say they support the working class; they show it with their votes. We want to thank all legislators from our traditional conservative members to our

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progressive legislators. Your support proves that the issue of workers' rights is a non-partisan one that touches every household in Vermont.

We have a chance to be a model for the Northeast when it comes to how workers should be treated and respected.

We, the workers of Vermont, ask the committee to let us decide the future: We ask that you send Proposal 3 to the full House taking the final step toward sending this constitutional amendment to the people.

STATE	Min. Wage Per Hour	% Uninsured	Infant Mortality Rate Per 1000 Live Births %	Poverty Rate %	Weekly Unemployment Benefit
Vermont	\$14.01	3.7	4.89	10.3	\$668.00
Alabama	\$7.25	9.9	6.69	16.1	\$275.00
Arizona	\$14.70	10.7	6.17	12.8	\$320.00
Arkansas	\$11.00	9.2	7.67	16.3	\$451.00
Florida	\$13.00	12.1	5.98	13.1	\$275.00
Kansas	\$7.25	9.2	5.81	11.7	\$612.00
Mississippi	\$7.25	11.9	9.11	19.4	\$235.00
Nebraska	\$13.50	7.1	5.83	10.8	\$546.00
Oklahoma	\$7.25	13.8	6.89	15.6	\$539.00

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Tennessee	\$7.25	10	6.61	13.6	\$325.00
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Sources:

https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/infant_mortality_rates/infant_mortality.htm **Infant Mortality**

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/uninsured-people-by-state> **Uninsured**

<https://wallethub.com/edu/e/most-educated-states/31075> **Education**

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/poverty-rate-by-state> **Poverty Rates**

<https://savingtoinvest.com/maximum-weekly-unemployment-benefits-by-state/> **Unemployment**

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