



Testimony of Nancy Fox

Pennsylvania House Labor Relations Committee

September 23, 2010

Good morning. My name is Nancy Fox and I am the National Director of Government Relations and Policy at the Screen Actors Guild, a union of professional actors representing over 120,000 members, approximately 4000 of who are under the age of 18. I want to thank Chairman Belfanti, Chairman DiGirolamo and the members of the Committee on Labor Relations for holding this hearing about protecting young performers. I am here to speak to you today about why these protections are so important to Screen Actors Guild.

Legislative advocacy for young performers is an essential function of our union. Screen Actors Guild has a long history of protecting children. In fact, since our founding in 1933, our union has helped create numerous laws and bargained for critical contract provisions designed solely to protect children's income, education and most of all, their safety and well-being. Child actors, after all, are among the most vulnerable of SAG members and often require stricter regulations to ensure they thrive in the often fast paced environment of show business.

Protecting kids in the entertainment industry presents a number of complex hurdles and challenges. Local school district restrictions, state government department's requirements and capacities, individual children's needs, parental responsibilities and realistic considerations for the industry all play a part in crafting appropriate and workable legislation. That is why it is so important that these laws be written carefully and precisely to ensure that they are enforceable, practical and truly accomplish what was initially intended.

We commend Representative Murt for introducing HB 2515 and Representative Gibbons for introducing HB 19 to address deficiencies in Pennsylvania's child labor law as it relates to television and film productions. While this bill goes a long way toward protecting children and navigating the challenges facing

production, we are advocating several important changes which we believe will make this bill one of best in the country.

For example, the bill rightly imposes a maximum number of hours a child may be on the set. Under the Screen Actors Guild contract, hours are set forth according to age. A child from the ages of 6-8 may be on set for 8 hours, though a portion of those must be devoted to schooling; a child from the age of 9-15 can be on the set for 9 hours including school time, meal periods are not included in either these age group hours,. Each group of young performers has a different set of rules depending on the age. These long established work hours have proven to be safe for children and acceptable to production. They are codified in CA, NY and LA Child Performer legislation and previously agreed upon between the MPAA and Screen Actors Guild.

Other issues, such as permitting, trust account requirements and educational requirements, have also been addressed, but require some fine-tuning. The permitting process proposed seems to run contrary to the way in which children, and all actors, are hired. More often than not, actors have no real advanced notice of actually being hired. In many cases, the job is for one day or less. Therefore the permitting process must be written in a way that acknowledges and accommodates these realities.

The language addressing trust accounts is also somewhat undefined. The establishment of the trust account must be the responsibility of the parent or guardian. This has proven successful in other states with trust account laws and is a necessary step in the process. We also suggest a greater definition is needed regarding the “safeguarding and conservation for the minor of the money derived from performance.” Whether this is meant as an additional suggestion or requirement beyond the scope of the trust account is unclear.

In summary, Screen Actors Guild is extremely grateful to Representatives Murt and Gibbons and their staffs for their dedication to young performers and creating a safe working environment for them. Strengthening these protections across the country is of paramount importance to Screen Actors Guild and we look forward to continuing to work with the sponsor, committees and the State of Pennsylvania to ensure that a strong, successful bill will benefit young performers.