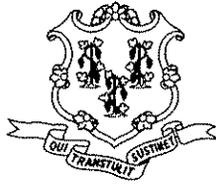


State Of Connecticut

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



PERMANENT COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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Testimony of Natasha M. Pierre Associate Legislative Analyst

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee Thursday, March 9, 2006

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Re:

SB 462, AAC A Fair Share Health Surcharge

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Rep. Ryan and members of the Committee. My name is Natasha Pierre and I am the Associate Legislative Analyst for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on **SB 462, AAC A Fair Share Health Surcharge**, which would require retail employers of 5,000 or more to pay a surcharge for health benefits.

As you know, retail is an industry that is female-dominated and underpaid. Women represent 48.1% of employees in sales and related occupations,¹ and the median annual earnings for cashiers are \$19,220.² Due to the high cost of coverage or eligibility restrictions, few employees have employer sponsored insurance (ESI). According to the Office of Health Care Access, 64% of working heads of HUSKY families have ESI, however, 34% are not enrolled because they cannot afford it (18%) or they are ineligible for it (16%).³ Instead

¹ Connecticut Department of Labor. *Connecticut Occupational Statistics of the Civilian Labor Force*, accessed 1/06 at www.ct.dol.state.ct.us/lmi.

² DOL Women's Bureau accessed 1/06 at www.dol.gov/wb//factsheets.

³ CT. Office of Health Care Access. *DATABOOK: Working Husky Families and Employers: Results of the Office of Health Care Access 2005 Working HUSKY Family and HUSKY Employer Surveys*, February 2006.

they seek assistance from state government programs in order to provide health care for themselves and their families.

This proposal would provide an affordable strategy for the biggest proportion of uninsured women to obtain access to health insurance. We thank you for your attention and urge your support of this proposal.