



AFT Connecticut
AFT, AFL-CIO

Healthcare
Higher Education
Public Employees
PSRP
Teachers

Testimony
Labor & Public Employees Committee
March 8, 2007
Sharon M. Palmer

35 Marshall Road
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
860/257-9782
Fax: 860/257-8214
Toll Free: 888/398-3373
www.aftct.org

Good morning Senator Prague, Representative Ryan and members of the committee. I am Sharon Palmer, President AFT Connecticut, a 26,000 member AFL-CIO Union.

Sharon Palmer
PRESIDENT

Melodie Peters
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

I am here today to remark on RB 7320 AAC Municipal Employee Health Insurance and Property Tax Relief.

Leo Canty
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

Let me begin by saying our union supports the five core principles from the Institute of Medicine regarding universal health care:

Thomas Bruenn
SECRETARY-TREASURER

1. Health care coverage should be universal
2. Health care coverage should be continuous
3. Health care coverage should be affordable to individuals and families
4. The health insurance strategy should be affordable and sustainable for society
5. Health insurance should enhance health and well-being by promoting access to high-quality care that is effective, efficient, safe, timely, patient-centered, and equitable.

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For our union, universal health care is both an economic and a social justice issue. Unions have been advocating for universal health care since the 1940's. Unions began to make life and health benefits available to members in the 1920's. In today's context a medicare type plan would work and should move toward insuring all residents of our state.

RB 7320 is a step in the right direction and I might add, a very large step for us because we have insurance collectively bargained through



municipal employers. We recognize the potential cost savings as set forth in the bill and want to work with you to achieve a workable plan.

We believe some changes need to be made in Section 6 regarding collective bargaining. Employers and employee unions should always be free to negotiate cost share agreements. Employers and employee unions should maintain their ability to provide enhanced or supplemental benefits to those provided by the universal plan. Collective bargaining still has an important role to play.

I began by stating our support of universal health care. We are pleased to see the inclusion of nonprofit corporations and small businesses in the bill, but what about everyone else who is uninsured? Our union cannot and will not support a plan that does not include everyone. The bill before you is property tax reform but only a small piece of health care reform. It is not enough to make this the only health care initiative undertaken this year. There is broad based public support for a comprehensive health care reform plan. We urge you to work on developing that plan and pledge our support and help in creating the universal plan.

Thank you for providing this hearing.