



Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Inc.

**Testimony of Attorney Susan Garten
In Support of RB 1292, AAC the Alternative Base Period
For Purposes of Unemployment Compensation**

In 2002, the legislature directed the Department of Labor to use an alternate base period to evaluate the eligibility for unemployment compensation for workers who lost their jobs through no fault of their own but who would have to wait from three to six months to collect benefits using the regular base period. The Department of Labor has now been administering the alternate base period for more than four years without a problem. Unemployed workers are getting benefits when they desperately need money to pay bills. It's time to make the ABP a permanent part of Connecticut's unemployment compensation system, and not a time-limited pilot program.

Here is how it works: if I filed a claim for unemployment compensation benefits today, the Department of Labor would calculate my benefits based on my wages from October 2005 through September 2006. That is my "base year"- the first four of the five most recently completed quarters before this calendar quarter. That's fine for workers with a long and continuous work history. But not counting up to six months of the most recently earned wages has the effect of denying timely unemployment payments to many temporary workers, contingent workers, minority workers, construction workers, seasonal workers, as well as those transitioning from welfare to work.

The solution for that delay is the alternate base period, which eliminates the "lag quarter" and counts the four most recently completed quarters prior to the quarter in which a claimant filed a claim. Using the alternate base period, a claim filed today would be based on wages earned from January 2006 through December 2006. It is fair, easy to administer, and should be the law.

