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**Testimony Before the Labor Committee in Support of
H.B. 6187, An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees
Submitted by Maggie Adair, Policy Director
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Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Ryan, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Maggie Adair, and I am Public Policy Director at the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS). CAHS is a statewide nonprofit organization that works to end poverty and engage, empower, and equip all families in Connecticut to achieve financial security.

CAHS is a partner in **Everybody Benefits, Connecticut's campaign for paid sick days**. I urge you to wage your support for H.B. 6187, An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees. There are compelling reasons to support paid sick days.

Paid Sick Days promote a healthier work place. When employees go to work sick, they spread their germs around and get other people sick. Think about people who care for the elderly in nursing homes, the school cafeteria workers who feed our children, or the restaurant workers who prepare your nice dinner out. According to research from the National Partnership for Women and Families, 78 percent of employees working in food service and accommodations lack paid sick days.

Paid Sick Days support family economic security. Low-wage workers who do not have paid sick time cannot afford to miss a day off – sick or not. In these tough economic times, working parents risk losing their jobs if they are forced to miss a work day because they are disabled from the flu or because they need to care for a sick toddler.

Paid Sick Days are good for business. Employees who come to work sick are less productive and take longer to recover from illness. They are also more likely to infect co-workers, which compounds reduced productivity.

Paid Sick Days allow workers to seek health care early on. Workers without paid sick days are more likely to avoid seeking care and end up in expensive emergency rooms. They are less likely to receive preventative care, which would keep them healthy. If you don't get your teeth cleaned, the chances for infection and more serious conditions are significantly higher.

Currently 40 percent of Connecticut workers do not receive paid sick days from their employers, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. That's a pretty scary thought – nearly half of workers in this state are forced to go to work even if they are sick as a dog. The United States is the

wealthiest country in the world, and yet does not provide the right for a worker to get sick. This bill will allow hard-working citizens to earn paid sick leave; it is not just given to them. Paid sick leave is a long over-due minimum work standard.

H.B. 6187 will benefit everyone in Connecticut, especially children and parents. More than 650,000 Connecticut workers are forced to choose between their health and pay. Many of these citizens are parents who need to stay home when their children get sick. Parents should not have to risk employment in order to care for their children. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, half of mothers miss work when a child gets sick. Of these, half lose pay when they take the time off.

Our low-wage worker force has the highest percentage of workers lacking paid sick days. Nationally, 77% of low-wage workers do not have paid sick days – these are the people who can least afford to miss a day of pay. These are the workers that keep the economy running: child care workers, food service workers, retail clerks, and maintenance workers. One lost day of pay can mean the difference between paying the rising cost of heating and gas bills and feeding their family. The right to take sick time should not be defined by income. This legislation reduces the inequity between lower- and higher-paid workers.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify.