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House Bill 6187, An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees Labor and Public Employees Committee February 24, 2009

CCIA Position: Opposed

Connecticut Construction Industries Association, Inc. (CCIA) represents the commercial construction industry in Connecticut and is committed to working together to advance and promote a better quality of life for all citizens in the state. CCIA is comprised of more than 350 members, including contractors, subcontractors, suppliers and affiliated organizations representing all sectors of the construction industry.

House Bill 6187, An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees, would require employers with fifty or more employees to provide six paid sick days to their employees for employees to use not only for their own illness but for reasons not directly related to their health or the well-being of others in the workplace. CCIA is **opposed** to the bill and we respectfully request that the committee not act on the bill.

While the purpose of the bill may be laudable – to provide paid sick leave to employees who find themselves in challenging circumstances and to encourage sick workers to stay home – the bill would not come without significant cost. A mandate on employers, many of whom already voluntarily provide the benefit, may cause employers to decide to provide less pay or other benefits to pay for the cost of sick leave. Adding to their cost of labor, a sick leave requirement will make it more difficult for companies to create new jobs, to grow, expand and compete in the marketplace.

As the economy slides further into recession and many companies are laying off workers, a requirement such as this will make it more difficult for companies in Connecticut to compete. Construction companies have been particularly hard hit by the slowdown. Many small business owners – the vast majority of construction companies – simply cannot afford to have workers out for substantial time on paid sick leave. Many small businesses employ more than 50 employees. The bill would add significant costs when employers are struggling to survive in the recession and under other costly requirements.

A number of states have considered paid sick leave legislation but the bills have been defeated following similar arguments by businesses and employer groups. Connecticut would be the first state to pass a law mandating paid sick leave. Only two jurisdictions – the cities of Washington, D.C. and San Francisco – require paid sick leave.



The bill should, at a minimum, provide an exemption for private sector employers who negotiate paid sick leave as one of the terms of a collective bargaining agreement. Employers and labor union representatives should be allowed to work it out at the bargaining table as a subject of contract negotiations if they so choose. Many CCIA member companies bargain statewide with representatives of unions for operating engineers, laborers, carpenters, Teamsters, masons and iron workers. Each of these unions provides pension, health and, in some cases, supplemental unemployment, legal services, holiday pay, apprenticeship training, and an annuity. Sick leave is a benefit traditionally subject to collective bargaining. The benefit should not be mandated by the state.

Below is a proposed amendment that we respectfully request the committee to consider. Indeed, in 2008, the Labor Committee considered Senate Bill 217, An Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees, which had a similar exemption. The exemption in section 2(e) of the HB 6187 is too weak and insufficient for collective bargaining agreements effective prior to January 1, 2010, and would not apply to collective bargaining agreements effective on and after January 1, 2010.

Proposed Amendment

CCIA respectfully recommends that, if the committee approves the bill, it strike lines 55 to 58 of the bill and substitute the following in lieu thereof: “required under this section and section 3 of this act, or (2) be applicable to any employee of an employer who is covered by a collective bargaining agreement with a private sector employer.”

For more information, please contact Matthew Hallisey, Director of Government Relations and Legislative Counsel for CCIA, at (860) 529-6855.