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February 24, 2009

Honorable Members of the Labor Committee
Legislative Office Building
Harford, CT 06106

Re: Small Business Opposition to HB-6187, An Act Mandating Employers To Provide Paid Sick Leave To Employees

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Rick Willard. I volunteer to serve as Chairman of the Connecticut Leadership Council for the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB). I am also the owner of Griswold, Willard & Strong in Wethersfield. Previously I managed our family business, Comstock, Ferre & Co., also in Wethersfield. I have worked for and with small businesses for nearly my entire professional career.

A non-profit, non-partisan organization, NFIB is Connecticut's and the nation's leading small business advocacy group. NFIB's mission is "To promote and protect the *right* of our members to own, operate and grow their businesses." In Connecticut, NFIB represents thousands of small and independent business owners and their workers involved in all types of industries: including manufacturing, retail trade, wholesale trade, transportation, professional services and agriculture. In short, NFIB represents the "Main Street" businesses in every city and town across our state.

Recognizing the vital role that small & independent businesses play in Connecticut's economy, both I and NFIB oppose HB-6187, An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees.

Small businesses in Connecticut are responsible for creating over 90% of all new jobs in Connecticut during the last ten years. Unfortunately, the state has also witnessed a record number of small businesses closing their doors. While this can be attributed to a variety of economic woes, small businesses often cite the staggering amounts of time and resources that go into compiling with state mandates as a reason for having to downsize their workforce or close their doors all together.

Businesses, particularly small businesses with fewer than 100 employees, need the flexibility to plan wage and benefit packages that allow them to expand and thrive. Contrary to what a lot of people believe, most small and midsize businesses make a very small profit. Also, the majority

of them are run with a minimal number of employees. The cost of additional government mandates is something that they simply can not afford.

With an unemployment rate of approximately 7%, a "one size fits all" sick leave policy mandate is not a measure that will help Connecticut companies grow. Instead, sick leave policies need to be tailored to each individual company because each company has different needs, different costs, and different obligations to its customers.

Mandating sick leave policies may result in: companies offering decreased services; companies reducing the size of their workforce; or companies ultimately closing their doors temporarily or even permanently. If you do not want to take my word for it, I encourage you to just ask some of our members or any business owners you may know.

Connecticut needs to take steps to rebuild our economy. HB-6187 will NOT achieve this goal. Therefore, I respectfully ask the committee to reject HB-6187.

Sincerely,

Rick Willard
Chairman
NFIB/Connecticut Leadership Council