



**STATEMENT REGARDING
Senate Bill 365: AAC Captive Audience Meetings**

**Labor and Public Employees Committee
February 24th, 2009**

The MetroHartford Alliance is Hartford's Chamber of Commerce and the region's economic development leader. Our investors include businesses of all sizes, health care providers, institutions of higher education, and 34 municipalities. The Alliance's mission is to ensure that the Hartford Region competes aggressively and successfully for jobs, talent and capital so that it thrives as one of the country's premier places for all people to live, work, play, and raise a family.

Senate Bill 365 directly conflicts with national labor law and policy. Section 8(c) of the National Labor Relations Act offers fair protection to "insure both to employers and labor organizations full freedom to express their views to employees on labor matters." Per this act, employers must already comply with strict federal regulations regarding employer-employee communications. In 2004, the Connecticut General Assembly considered this concept and chose not to pursue it. In the bill summary, the Office of Legislative Research referenced the existing protections of the NLRA, "The NLRA guarantees the employer's right to express an opinion about unionization as long as the employer does not also threaten reprisal or promise a benefit." In fact, National Labor Relations Board, created under the NLRA, exists to administer this law and oversee allegations of unfair labor practices nationwide.

Not only is Senate Bill 365 arguably preempted by federal law, it also goes a step further in the wrong direction by incorporating an expanded restriction on communication for employers of all sizes, including non-profits. This restriction is written to include conversations about "political matters," which are defined as "political party affiliation or the decision to join or not join any political, social or

community group or labor organization.” This broad definition raises concerns about the ability of employers to keep employees informed about important issues affecting their jobs. Particularly at this time of economic uncertainty when the policy decisions made by our elected officials have a very direct impact on the business environment, employers must be able to freely communicate, within the existing restrictions of the NLRA and oversight of the NLRB, with employees regarding significant business matters and workplace issues at mandatory staff meetings.

Connecticut is already one of the most costly states in the nation to do business. By attempting to frustrate the purpose of existing federal law, Senate Bill 365 would further decrease our ability to be competitive in an increasingly unstable marketplace. Recently, Connecticut received unfortunate notoriety in *Forbes* and *Expansion Management*, magazines widely read by corporate site selectors who make recommendations on business relocation decisions. Consistently, our state is ranked at or near the bottom of such lists with regard to the cost of doing business and the cost of living in general. Even proposing legislation such as Senate Bill 365 sends a message that not only further substantiates those dismal rankings, but communicates to Connecticut’s existing employers that we are not a friendly place for them to remain or expand. At this time of intense global competition for jobs, capital and talent, it is important for Connecticut to send a pro-growth message to incumbent businesses considering expansion as well as those looking to relocate.

As an economic development organization and the capital city’s chamber of commerce, we ask that you consider the *highly* anti-competitive implications that proposals such as Senate Bill 365, even at the committee level, have on our collective efforts to grow jobs and to retain and recruit talent. We ask you to work with us to help Connecticut stand out as a *premier* place to do business and create jobs, and take steps to help us strengthen our economy for future growth.

For these reasons, we are opposed to Senate Bill 365.