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Dear Insurance and Real Estate Committee Members:

I am writing in support of H.B. 5219 AN ACT EXTENDING STATE CONTINUATION OF HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE.

We all know the difficult financial times we live in and have been in for the last one to two years. Some of us are fortunate to have jobs; many of us have lost our jobs and are currently searching for employment. You in the Insurance and Real Estate Committee can help those individuals in Connecticut who have lost their jobs and are struggling to hang on until they can secure another job.

We all have heard that small business is the backbone of the American Economy, employees of small business in Connecticut need your help.

Companies with less than twenty employees are not covered under the Federal COBRA provisions, but rather are covered by State Continuation of Health Insurance. State Continuation of Health Insurance allows individuals covered under their previous employer's health coverage to continue health coverage by paying the full cost of the healthcare. The past employer may collect up to 102% of the health premium to cover the administrative cost of collecting premiums. Since the entire cost is paid by the individual, the State of Connecticut does not expend any monies to support State Continuation of Health Insurance.

State Continuation of Health Insurance is a vital safety net for those residents of Connecticut who are currently unemployed. Many believe that the Charter Oak Health Plan fills the void created for individuals without health coverage, unfortunately "By statute, Charter Oak enrollees cannot have been covered by health insurance during the past six months". Six months is a long time to go without health coverage.

I therefore ask for your help in changing State Law to extend State Continuation of Health Insurance from 18 months to 30 months.

Thank you for allowing me to be part of your debate on H.B. No. 5219.

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