

Testimony of Amanda Girardin
S.B. No. 63 An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees
February 25, 2010

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Ryan and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Amanda Girardin. I am resident of Andover, Connecticut and am currently a graduate student at the UConn School of Social Work doing my field placement at Aetna Foundation Children's Center, the Children's Advocacy Center in Hartford, while also working two part time jobs. I am here on behalf of our clients at the center, as well as my co-workers and friends to urge you to vote yes for SB No. 63, An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees.

At the Aetna Foundation Children's Center, we offer services to children who are victims of child sexual abuse and their non-offending caregivers. As an intern I constantly hear the complaints of caregivers, most of whom are women, who cannot find time to schedule forensic interviews, medicals or therapy for their children because they cannot afford to take time off from work to accompany them. This is not only frustrating for parents, but also for the providers who deal with many missed appointments. These slots are then not available for other clients and go unused. This delay in services is detrimental to the child victims who are unable to obtain the services and assessments they need after suffering from such traumatic events. This delay can also hinder the police investigation. On top of it all some of these female, and sometimes male, caregivers are then targeted by child protective services for being negligent and not getting their children the help they require. No parent or caregiver should be forced to make a decision between making financial ends meet and getting their child the help they need.

This proposed law also affects me and my close friends and co-workers on a very personal level. I have worked many jobs within the food industry while being a student and in between degrees. In addition to only making the minimum wage allowed by law while trying to save enough money to go to graduate school, and pay my bills, I never once received sick days. If I was sick, which I was for a month with a bad viral infection, my choices were to stay home and lose money or go to my job sick. Mind you, my job involved preparing and serving food and beverages to thousands of customers a day. I am lucky enough to be living with my mother still and so missing days of work was not a matter of meeting my basic needs but for many of my co-workers it was. Many of my co-workers were parents unable to meet their own health needs and those of their children because they needed to work to keep a roof over their head and food on the table. One man I worked with had a severely ill infant, and a younger wife, was forced to work two jobs everyday and could never take the time to bring his baby to the hospital. Paid sick leave for this man would greatly reduce his stress improving his own mental health and allow him to take better care of his ailing child. Even my friends and co-workers without children to care for felt the stress of making money and would consistently come to work sneezing, coughing or with a fever during the flu season. People working these minimum-wage, food service jobs are much more likely to be highly dependent upon those one or two days worth of wages that they miss if they take sick days than are the persons who currently possess paid sick leave.

It is imperative not only for the health of these workers and their families but for the safety and health of consumers as well that this law be passed and people provided with paid sick leave that they have earned and deserve by putting in the time and hard work. Again I hope I can count on your support to vote yes for SB. 63. Thank you for your time.