

**Katherine Emery, CEO Walker Systems Support
Testimony for Labor and Public Employees Committee
IN SUPPORT OF SB 63**

To Senator Prague, Representative Ryan and the members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

My name is Kate Emery. I am the CEO of Walker Systems Support. Founded in 1982, we are a medium sized network management and computer technical support firm located in Farmington Connecticut, with 50 employees and were named one of the fastest growing private companies in the nation.

I'm here today to testify IN SUPPORT OF SB 63, the paid sick days bill.

I'm extremely proud of the company we've built, and much of that success is due to talented and dedicated employees who care deeply about the clients they serve, and our company. I believe that employees are investors in a company every bit as much as shareholders are, and I also believe that companies create community and should not be perceived of as simply the property of its shareholders. When, an employer shows employees respect by providing paid time off to take care of themselves and their families, they can expect loyalty and increased productivity in return.

If we operate as if employees are nothing more than annoying, expensive commodities, we ultimately harm ourselves. If for no other reason we should realize that as Connecticut employers, our collective employees are also our clients and customers, and if we short change them as employees we are short changing ourselves down the road. Children and mothers are particularly hard hit. People who are stressed out financially, emotionally, and physically don't create a healthy community, so there are good financial reasons to treat employees fairly and with respect even if the basic human desire to be fair and compassionate doesn't provide reason enough.

Most businesses offer paid time off and understand that it's the humane thing to do, but unless you establish a floor, there will be unsavory companies that take advantage of the most vulnerable among us and deprive them of this basic accommodation. And when you allow companies to make the choice, then there tends to be a race to the bottom: Businesses that might wish to do the right thing feel pinched if they're forced to compete against the less scrupulous companies that don't provide this basic benefit. Especially after last fall's outbreak of H1N1, it should be common sense to guarantee workers a minimum number of days to protect working people, the public health, and also our businesses.

Providing paid time off is a win-win. We need to set a floor (and five days per year seems reasonable). I urge the legislature to adopt and the Governor to sign this humane and common sense reform.