

Testimony –Raised Bill 5465

Labor and Public Employees Committee - February 1, 2011

My name is Brian Anderson. I am a legislative representative for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 35,000 Connecticut public and private employee members. Approximately, 3,000 of these members are paraprofessional educators.

~~Council 4 supports Raised Bill 5465, An Act concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees.~~ This bill extends Family and Medical Leave to paraprofessionals. FMLA allows workers to take a leave of absence (up to 12 weeks if they have worked the previous 12 months), unpaid, if they, a spouse, child or parent become ill (or in case of the first year of a child's birth, an adoption or to donate organs or bone marrow). FMLA is generally the sort of thing that people do not want to use unless there is a dire need. Very few families can afford to take unpaid time and lose income for any reason. Employers have the right to make employees use any vacation time or sick time for FMLA.

Paraprofessionals are unable to utilize the state provision of the law because they routinely work under the requisite 1,250 hours per year. This bill sets the requirement for paraprofessionals at 700 hours per year. This change would allow for this large segment of workers, who are called upon to provide very valuable societal service often under very trying circumstances (such as providing educational services to children with special needs), to have a right that our country provides to almost every other type of worker. This bill provides basic fairness.

If you need further information, please call me at 860-690-2597. Thank you for your consideration.