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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

**Kevin Lembo
State Comptroller**

Concerning SB 913 AA Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Days to Employees

Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, Senator Guglielmo, Representative Rigby, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for SB 913 AA Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Days to Employees.

According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), 553,000 workers in the State of Connecticut representing almost 39 percent of the private sector workforce do not have paid sick days through their employer. Through this legislation, an estimated 257,000 workers representing 18 percent of the private workforce would become eligible for paid sick days.

The benefits of this bill are significant for employees, employers and the general public.

As a public health issue, this legislation would have a profound impact on helping to contain the spread of illness between co-workers and others that are in contact with a sick employee during the work day. A recent study conducted by the IWPR showed that eight million people in the United States went to work with the H1N1 virus and spread it to another seven million co-workers. Another study published in the American Journal of Epidemiology demonstrated lower rates of respiratory and gastrointestinal infection among nursing home residents when nurses were given paid sick days. Exposure to an array of viruses and other illnesses may also take place as a sick employee without paid sick days assists a customer at a local retail store or serves them a meal at a local restaurant.

This legislation would provide for a healthier Connecticut workforce and decreased health care costs. Paid sick days enable employees to improve their own health, and their families' health – lowering health care costs for all.

In addition, having time available to visit a doctor during normal hours avoids the use of the emergency room for preventative or non-emergency health care. This lowers healthcare costs even further.

Paid sick days would also boost workers' economic security. In today's economic climate, more and more families live paycheck to paycheck. This bill will enable workers to have paid time off and erase the fear of being fired, suspended or penalized for taking time to care for an ill family member or oneself. This is especially important for working parents – especially mothers. Research shows that 78% of women take time off from work to care for a sick child, while just 26.5% of men do. And women are shown to have a significant role in providing for their families; in dual-earner couples, women provide an average of 44% in annual family income.

The benefits to businesses that provide paid sick days are noteworthy. Not only would the spread of illness in the workplace be curtailed, but so would presenteeism or productivity that is lost when employees go to work sick. The National Partnership for Women & Families estimates that presenteeism costs employers an average of \$255 per employee per year. In addition, businesses would save money by the reduced rate of employee turn-over, which increases costs for the advertising, interviewing and training of new hires.

A report from the IWPR shows that providing paid sick days can save Connecticut businesses nearly \$73 million a year. The estimated costs for covered workers will be roughly \$.19 per hour worked, or \$6.87 per worker per week. The benefits for employers (reduced turn-over and illness contagion) are quantified at \$12.32 per worker per week, yielding a net savings of \$5.45 per worker per week for covered workers.

This legislation is simply good public health policy and good business sense. I urge you to support SB 913.

Thank you for your consideration.