



State of Connecticut

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913

Testimony On ~~SB 913~~, An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees March 1, 2011

Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, Senator Guglielmo, Representative Rigby, distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding SB 913, An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees.

While I believe that its proponents have none but the best intentions, I oppose this bill for two reasons. The first is related to its effects on businesses, the second to perceptions within the larger business community.

For five years, I was the chief executive of a firm that belonged to one of the large, international media companies. Based on that experience, I can tell you that running a business is hard work. I can also tell you that no small or medium-sized business can succeed unless those who run it value their employees and treat them with all due respect and consideration. These businesses are dependent on their employees to function properly, and one disgruntled staff member can easily poison an atmosphere. Although not all business owners or managers are decent human beings, the great majority have the sense to worry about upsetting or losing their employees. So not necessarily because they want to, but because they must, they will go to great lengths to accommodate requests for time off related to illness, family matters, accidents, or violent events.

If business owners in Connecticut are faced with the new mandate imposed by this bill, they will have to deal with the administration entailed in compliance. While they might otherwise give employees with legitimate reasons even more time off than the bill requires, under the new rules, most employees may take the time off because it is

available to them, leading to reduced productivity and a higher cost of doing business. Because of the inconvenience and potential costs, employers may hesitate to grow their businesses beyond 49 employees.

I would like to note that the bill protects employees against abuse of their right to paid leave by their employers, but I don't believe that it protects employers against abuses by employees, who might use the days of paid leave without having legitimate reasons for doing so.

The second reason for my opposition to the bill is that I believe it sends a truly negative signal to the business community, both within and outside of Connecticut. I think that all of us in the General Assembly agree with Governor Malloy, who, in his budget proposal, calls job creation the "single biggest issue facing Connecticut". I think we all want to attract businesses to our state, we want those that are here to stay here, and we want them all to grow and create jobs.

At the very moment when attracting businesses and encouraging them to invest in Connecticut is our highest priority, this bill suggests just the opposite. The timing could not be more unfortunate. Even discussing this bill now makes our state government appear lacking in an understanding of the requirements of businesses, unreliable, and, frankly, not altogether sincere in its support of business and job creation.

I respectfully urge the members of the committee not to pursue passage of this legislation.