

Testimony of
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Hartford Federation, AFT Local 2221
SB 150 An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for
Certain Municipal Employees
Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 1, 2012

Good Afternoon, Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Shellye Davis and I am Co-President of the Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals (HFP), AFT Local 2221. As a collective bargaining unit, we represent Paraprofessionals who serve a diverse student population in the City of Hartford's School System. We are also 10-month employees who are not eligible for unemployment.

I would like to speak briefly today in favor of SB 150, An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees.

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provided select employees with up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid employment protected leave per year. It also requires that their group medical benefits continue during the leave. FMLA is designed to help employees balance both family and work responsibility. It also seeks to accommodate the legitimate interest of employers and while promoting equal employment opportunities for both men and woman.

The HFT strongly supports this bill, and the need for our members to be covered by it. As professional public educational employees, it is imperative that we maintain a positive and focused environment for the children and families we serve, including our own. Our lives are parallel to our community; we are susceptible to the same issues confronted daily by all those striving to make a peaceful and responsible life for their love ones and themselves. The anxiety and stress of welcoming a newborn into our family, caring for an ailing spouse, child or parent, or a recovery from an injury or serious health issue, should not have to be compounded by the fear of losing our employment or our health benefits. The members of HFP are some of the most caring, creative and resourceful paraprofessionals (and people) in the country. The commitment and dedication of these men and woman, who serve the Hartford School System, is unparalleled. They richly deserve to have the peace of mind in knowing their service to the community is important.

The triumphs and the tragedies that inevitably affect all lives should not be compounded by the taking of one's livelihood. People need to be able to take care of themselves and their family. In the grander scheme of things, we all benefit! Please help us, I urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify before you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.