



## State of Connecticut

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### **Testimony in Support of HB 5904- AN ACT CONCERNING A SICK LEAVE BANK FOR MUNICIPAL FIRST RESPONDERS**

**February 20, 2013**

#### **Government and Elections Administration Committee**

I would like to thank the Honorable Co-Chairs Senator Anthony Musto and Representative Ed Jutila, the Honorable Vice Chairs Senator Meyer and Representative Matthew Lesser, and the Ranking Members Senator McLachlan and Representative Tony Hwang, and the entire membership of the Government and Elections Administration Committee for their time today addressing this personal and emotional issue.

HB 5904 proposes to require the state, through an appropriate state agency, to create a sick leave bank for municipal firefighters, police officers, and emergency services personnel who have exhausted their sick leave and other leave benefits. Our caucus thought of this proposal after the horrific event that took place in Sandy Hook.

Municipal first responders are vital members of our communities who risk their health and lives on a daily basis to protect and help our most vulnerable citizens. This proposal would in turn help them in their most vulnerable times.

The sick leave bank would be modeled after similar programs currently in use at the state level, including here at the legislature. Employees who opt into the program annually donate a specified amount of sick leave time to the bank. Participating employees can access the sick leave time in the bank when they suffer long-term illnesses or catastrophic injuries and have exhausted their sick leave, personal leave, compensatory time, or vacation time. The process would be overseen by a committee that reviews the requests.

This sick leave bank would protect families from complete financial loss when an employee has exhausted their leave time and salary replacement insurance, or when the illness or injury is not covered by Workers' Compensation.

I respectfully ask the committee to give thorough consideration of this proposal as a way to provide additional resources to first responders who have depleted their sick leave time.

Thank you.