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Testimony in Support of HB 5895 Government Administration and Elections Committee February 22, 2013

Chairmen Musto and Jutila, Ranking Members McLachlan and Hwang, and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, the House Republican Caucus appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of **House Bill 5895: *An Act Establishing a Sick Leave Bank for Municipal First Responders.***

This bill 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.