

Testimony of Eric W. Gjede  
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Before the Children's Committee  
Hartford, CT  
March 5, 2013

**Testifying in Opposition to HB-6501**  
**An Act Concerning Parental Engagement**

Good Afternoon Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and members of the Children's Committee. My name is Eric Gjede and I am assistant counsel at the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA) which represents more than 10,000 large and small companies throughout the state of Connecticut.

Although we believe parental involvement in their children's education is important, the business community opposes the mandate contemplated in HB 6501.

The bill would require employers to provide twenty hours per year to employees to attend their children's qualified school-related activities. The employee would be required to utilize existing vacation, personal leave, compensatory time off or unpaid leave for the purposes of this proposal. Failure for an employer to provide this leave to an employee would result in a hearing and penalty imposed by the labor department.

There are a number of issues in this bill that concerns the business community:

1. The bill has the potential to create significant morale issues within a business. It provides employees with children or grandchildren an additional benefit not provided to employees without children or grandchildren.
2. This bill disregards the staffing needs of employers and conflicts with their policies for requesting and approving time off that were implemented to provide fairness amongst all employees.
3. Is an employer still required to provide leave to an employee who has exhausted their vacation, personal or compensatory leave? If so, that places an unreasonable burden on businesses that need employees to be there to perform the functions for which they were hired.
4. The definition of qualified school-related activities is extremely vague.
5. The bill provides 20 hours to any employee of an employer. Does an employee that works a part-time job a few hours a week really need additional time off to attend school functions?
6. The bill requires employers to accept whatever documentation a school deems appropriate and reasonable in order to verify the parent participated in the activity. Given the lack of standardized documentation method, how can employers truly verify the documents being provided are genuine?

Employers in this state value their employees, and have increasingly provided flexibility in their leave policies to accommodate their needs. However, imposing another mandate on Connecticut businesses does not help rehabilitate Connecticut's reputation for being unfriendly to business.

While we believe HB-6501 is a well-intended bill, we strongly urge the committee to reject it.