



**Public Hearing Testimony of
Sharon M. Palmer, Commissioner
Department of Labor
Labor and Public Employees Committee
February 26, 2013**

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak, Senator Markley, Representative Smith and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with testimony regarding *House Bill 6433, AAC Technical and Other Changes to the Labor Department Statutes*. My name is Sharon Palmer and I am the Labor Commissioner.

I am here to speak in support of this bill which makes technical changes to DOL statutes and repeals obsolete statutes and reports. A summary of the changes follows:

- Sections 1 and 2 make a technical change to CGS 31-232b which is our Extended Benefits (EB) law. The EB Program provides 13 to 20 weeks of extended unemployment benefits to states experiencing high levels of unemployment. Although our current EB statute correctly conforms with the federal 13 week definition of this program, an inconsistency exists in two minor sections of the law that incorrectly states the time period of "three months" instead of "thirteen weeks". This technical change corrects that oversight by simply deleting "three months" in those two minor sections and inserting "thirteen weeks".
- Sections 3 and 4 amend CGS 31-51xx and CGS 31-51aaa which improves funding opportunities for DOL's Individual Development Account (IDA) customers and reflects current practice. As the law currently stands, a participant in the Connecticut Individual Development Account (IDA) Program can receive a maximum of \$3,000 in matching funds if they save the required amount of money in their IDA. However, they can only receive \$1,000 in match per calendar year. Propose to eliminate the \$1,000 per year cap for matching funds while leaving in place the existing \$3,000 maximum cap for matching funds over the life of the program
- Section 5 repeals CGS 31-3g(d) which is the DOL displaced homemaker program. This program has been de-funded by the Legislature and no longer exists.
- Section 6 repeals CGS 31-51qq DOL report regarding the aggregate usage of FMLA by employees. It was an extra burden on employers to report the aggregate usage of FMLA by its employees so DOL tried to collect the data electronically in order to avoid the printing and mailing costs. However, the response by employers was very low so the data collected was not helpful because it was not a true representation of the aggregate usage of FMLA by Connecticut employees.

- Sections 7, 8 and 9 repeal CGS 31-57a DOL report regarding the awarding of contracts to National Labor Relations Act violators. The CT DOL does not have any jurisdiction over the National Labor Relations Act and we do not compile such a list.
- Section 10 amends 31-57h to include the Commissioners of Insurance Department and Consumer Protection on the joint enforcement commission on employee misclassification.
- Sections 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 repeal CGS 31-61 which is the DOL wage board because it no longer exists. These duties are now performed by DOL's Wage and Workplace Standards investigators.
- Section 18 amends CGS 31-31l providing for the merger of the Twenty-First Century Skill Training program into the Incumbent Worker Training Program. It is a streamlining move to make the programs easy to understand for employers and workers. Under the current construct, there are 6 different applications in CT for Incumbent Worker Training funds. By merging, it creates one application and program that can be used throughout the state. Each region will use the same application and criteria. What exists now is confusing and cumbersome. It is difficult to measure impact with 6 different processes. Further, it appropriates 10% of funds for the program for the funding of support services for the incumbent worker. Allow 10% of the Incumbent Worker Training funds to pay for support services for the incumbent worker (i.e. transportation & childcare).
- Section 19 repeals obsolete statute sections on religious discrimination in CT (CGS 53-303e (b)(d)).
- Section 20 repeals various statutes and reports.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.