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WRITTEN TESTIMONY  
Kevin Lembo  
State Comptroller

Concerning  
R.B. 6553 AA Establishing a Task Force to Study Family Medical Leave Insurance

March 12, 2013

Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak, Senator Markley, Representative Smith and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for *Raised Bill 6553, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Family Medical Leave Insurance*.

This bill will create a task force to study the possible implementation of an insurance program that would provide short-term benefits to workers to care for themselves and their families while maintaining economic stability.

According to the National Partnership for Women and Families, nearly 50 percent of workers are not able to take an unpaid leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) because they are employed by businesses with less than 50 employees. In a follow-up study on FMLA, 78 percent of employees who needed to take a leave under the program's eligibility guidelines were unable to do so because they could not afford it. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that only 11 percent of the U.S. workforce has paid family leave through their employers.

The number of family caregivers who provide support for parents and aging relatives continues to grow here in Connecticut, especially as the baby boomer generation ages. According to AARP, studies show that throughout the year, there are 711,000 family caregivers in Connecticut providing 465 million hours of care, which total a value of \$5.8 billion. If family caregivers are no longer available, the economic cost to the U.S. health care and long-term services and support systems would increase significantly.

Women who have given birth and return to work after a paid leave are 39 percent less likely to receive public assistance and 40 percent less likely to receive food stamps the year after their child's birth, when compared to those returning after an unpaid leave or no leave at all.

The benefits to employees are clear, but employers may benefit from a family medical leave insurance program as well. In a comprehensive study of California's Family Leave Insurance program, a majority of employers showed either a cost savings or no additional costs related to implementation because the work of employees on leave was temporarily assigned to other employees or to temporary replacements.

I hope you will support this legislation and look forward to working with the task force on examining how this might work in the state of Connecticut.

Thank you.