

Testimony of Eric W. Gjede  
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Before the Committee on Labor and Public Employees  
Hartford, CT  
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**Testifying on RB 6554 An Act Concerning Unemployment Compensation**

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak, and members of the Labor and Public Employees 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.

HB 6554 appears to be a placeholder bill for legislation concerning the state's unemployment compensation program. We think this bill would be an excellent opportunity for the committee to consider reforms to the unemployment compensation system proposed by CBIA earlier this session.

The first proposal would involve a change to the definition of "willful misconduct" in the unemployment compensation statutes. Under current statute, an employee has engaged in willful misconduct, and therefore not eligible for unemployment compensation benefits, if they had three "instances" of failing to show up or call into their job in a twelve month period. However, an "instance" is defined as "one day or two consecutive days". The business community believes one instance should equal one day. This proposal is the same as bill 152 from the 2012 session, which was raised with bipartisan support. We urge the committee to support this reform proposal.

CBIA also proposed changing the definition of "suitability of work" to better reflect today's economy. Many people who lost their jobs as a result of the recession are still searching for a job with the same duties and salary as their former position. Unfortunately, these positions often no longer exist, and the individual's prior work experience is not as relevant after being out of the workforce for an extended period of time. What is considered "suitable work" for an individual should be changed over time in order to encourage a speedy return to the workforce and prevent further skill diminishment. We urge the committee to support this reform proposal.