



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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**To:** Senate Co-Chair Eric Coleman  
House Co-Chair Gerald Fox  
Senate Ranking Member John Kissel  
House Ranking Member Rosa Rebimbas  
Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee

**From:** Paul J. Knierim  
Probate Court Administrator

**Re:** RB 5488 An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage for  
Probate Court Personnel

**Date:** March 17, 2014

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Raised Bill RB 5488 An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage for Probate Court Personnel. The bill, which is the product of a joint effort among the Connecticut Association of Probate Clerks, the Connecticut Probate Assembly and my office, has my strong personal support.

Since 1997, probate judges and court employees have been part of the state employee health insurance plan. As a result, probate participants have the same options for insurance carriers and plans as state employees and others who are permitted to participate in the plan. There is, however, one key distinction: The premiums to cover dependents are higher for probate participants than for state employees. The difference in premiums is mandated by statute. Depending on which plan an employee is enrolled in, it can cost a probate participant more than twice as much as it costs a state employee for the same coverage.

We respectfully request that the General Assembly rectify this inequity. Probate Court employees and judges are subject to the same eligibility rules as all other participants in the state plan. Probate Court employees have also experienced

the same kinds of sacrifices as state employees during the budget crisis, including a pay freeze during three of the past four years. They embraced the challenges of court consolidation and put in extra hours to make a success of it, yielding savings to the general fund of \$4 million each year since 2011.

The effective date of our proposal is July 1, 2015 and the estimated cost, beginning in fiscal year 2015-16, will be in the range of \$450,000 to \$500,000 annually. The amount is modest in comparison to the savings that the system has achieved through efficiency measures; more importantly, it is a reasonable expenditure to bring fairness to the health insurance benefit for Probate Court employees.

On behalf of the Probate Court system, I urge the committee to act favorably on the bill. Thank you for your consideration.