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March 13, 2014

TO: Members of the Judiciary Committee

Re: Please Support **HB5488**,
AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTHCARE COVERAGE FOR PROBATE COURT PERSONNEL

Dear Judiciary Committee:

My name is Evan Brunetti, and I am the Chief Clerk of the Farmington-Burlington Probate Court, and have been with the Probate Court since 2007. I am married, and we have a one-year old daughter. We, like many of families in the probate court system, receive our healthcare coverage through employment in the probate court system. On behalf of all the families in the system, **please support HB5488**.

In essence, the bill will make the cost of dependent healthcare coverage for court employees the same as state employees covered under the state healthcare plan. The statute that provides for probate employee healthcare coverage and contribution rates is the same statute as state employees, just different sub-sections. In the statute, the probate court employees are the only employees that pay a higher premium for dependent healthcare, with no clear reason why. The above referenced bill will simply align our healthcare coverage with the terms and conditions of all other employees governed by the state healthcare plan in the same statute.

With approximately 72 areas of jurisdiction, the Probate Courts provide very important services that affect the most intimate, sensitive, and life changing circumstances that face citizens every day, whether it is the death of a loved one, the challenges faced by the elderly or someone with mental health issues or the intellectually disabled, or the protection of children. With each year, it seems mental health, guardianships, conservatorships, and parental rights matters require significantly more time and attention. People are increasingly coming to the courts, without an attorney, and often without the funds to pay for court or legal services. Despite these modern trends, the Probate Court System went through a massive restructuring beginning in 2008 with cost saving measures, such as pay and hiring freezes, and ended in 2011 with standardizing compensation and benefits and court consolidation. Restructuring the courts saves the state \$4 million per year, but the workload of the courts continues to increase.

Probate Employees and their families will have better access to healthcare and their lives will be improved if the bill passes. Please support HB5488. Thank you for your time and consideration as to this matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Warm Regards,

/s/

Evan