

Testimony of Eric W. Gjede
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Before the Committee on Labor and Public Employees
Hartford, CT
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Testifying in opposition to HB 5256 AAC The Compensation of Workers on Family Holidays

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.

A number of surveys released in the past year consistently ranked Connecticut as one of the highest cost and least business-friendly states. While this state has many virtues, the perception of Connecticut as a bad place to do business has gone nation-wide. Businesses pay attention to these surveys, and many make the choice to locate or grow their business elsewhere. This negative perception denies our citizens many job opportunities that could have helped advance their careers.

CBIA opposes HB 5256 because it adds credibility to the assertion that Connecticut is too costly to do business. Several of the wage bills already raised this session further reduce Connecticut's ability to compete with neighboring states. These bills drive up the cost of an hour's worth of labor in our state. The result is higher prices for goods and services, and less available hours and opportunities for employees.

The period between Thanksgiving and Christmas is when many retail businesses finally begin to show profit. Increasing labor costs, which leads to prices increases, will only serve to suppress sales at Connecticut businesses while boosting sales elsewhere. In a small state like Connecticut, it is far too easy to run across the border to shop or just purchase your goods online.

Additionally, this bill ignores the fact that many people volunteer to work on the days defined as "family holidays" under this bill. Contrary to the presuppositions this bill makes, many people enjoy working on these holidays -- particularly those earning tips or commissions.

We encourage the committee to take no further action on this bill, and to pursue legislation that will bring more businesses, jobs and opportunities to Connecticut.