



**Written Public Hearing Testimony of  
Sharon Palmer, Commissioner  
Department of Labor  
Labor and Public Employees Committee  
February 27, 2014**

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak, Senator Markley and Representative Smith and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with written testimony regarding **House Bill No. 5283, AAC Expansion of Family and Medical Leave**. My name is Sharon Palmer and I am the Labor Commissioner.

I support the concept of this bill to the extent that it expands the right to take Family and Medical Leave to care for additional family members. Allowing employees to take FMLA time to care for ill siblings, grandparents and grandchildren is laudable as we often hear from individuals that they are needed to provide such care but cannot risk losing their jobs. While the department appreciates the legislature's intent to expand the scope of the program, we cannot support this bill at this time. Currently a significant amount of staff time is expended responding to inquiries and investigating FMLA complaints made with the agency. The complaint and investigation process is particularly time consuming as it requires staff to seek a significant amount of information in order to determine if a violation is believed to exist, and then pursuing the complaint to a full administrative public hearing if they do so. In addition, even in cases where staff do not believe a violation exists, our agency is required to hold a full administrative hearing if the complainant requests one. Without additional resources, the agency would not be able to absorb the increase in complaints that this bill would generate. The Department would require additional funding to implement this bill, which is not provided in the Governor's budget and, therefore, we cannot support this bill at this time.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony today.