

Testimony submitted to the Labor and Public Employees Committee supporting passage of H.B. 5451

Submitted on March 11, 2014 by David Glidden, CSEA/Local 2001 Director of Collective Bargaining.

Hello, my name is David Glidden and I serve as the Director of Collective Bargaining for CSEA/SEIU Local 2001. CSEA is a labor union that represents thousands of municipal and board of education employees working across our state.

Over the last several years, in virtually every set of contract negotiations, the union and management must grapple with the crisis in health care. Rapidly escalating health care costs in combination with flat or diminished revenue streams often lead to concession bargaining. The problem is especially pronounced in small towns that, by their nature, have limited negotiating power with health care providers. The result is that hard-working public servants have to pay more for their health care while watching their wages stagnate. All this as they continue to try to provide for their families in a difficult economy.

It doesn't have to be that way. The State's Partnership Program, established by the General Assembly and administered by the Office of the State Comptroller, gives municipalities the power to control their health care costs. The concept is simple. By joining the State of Connecticut Employee Health Benefits Plan, municipalities instantly achieve the same bargaining advantages enjoyed by large employers. The result is better coverage at a better price.

In every set of contract negotiations, our union negotiators request that the town obtain a Partnership Plan quote through the Comptroller's Office. The Comptroller's Office has made the process of getting a quote extraordinarily easy. And, when getting a quote, there is no obligation to go with the Partnership Plan. The employer can go with the plan, reject the plan, or even use the quote as leverage when negotiating with providers. I submit to you that getting a quote is simply a matter of due diligence and responsible research.

In short, there is no justifiable reason why a municipality or a board of education would not get a quote. Yet, in many of our negotiations, towns refuse to stick their heads out of the shell and look. They believe the self-serving advice of health care brokers that the