



Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

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Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services
HB 6932, An Act Concerning Paid Family Leave
Labor and Public Employees Committee, March 5, 2015

Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak, and esteemed members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 6932, *An Act Concerning Paid Family Leave*. CONNSACS is the state's leading voice to end sexual violence and the coalition of our state's nine community-based sexual assault crisis services programs, which provide free and confidential sexual assault crisis counseling and victim advocacy to thousands of women, men and children, of all ages, each year. CONNSACS supports HB 6932 *An Act Concerning Paid Family Leave*. CONNSACS is a member of the Connecticut Campaign for Paid Family Leave and fully endorses their recommendations.

There are many strengths of the proposed bill. Paid family leave would allow Connecticut employees to take a 12 week paid leave from their employers to be able to care for their own illness, the illness of a family member, the birth of a child, and the bonding of a child. Another component, the 100% wage-replacement, will ensure that all employees can take a leave while maintaining their economic security. Employee-contributions rather than funded by employers allows for workers to pay into the system at no cost to employers. CONNSACS appreciates these provisions as they seek to address the weaknesses in the state's unpaid FMLA. Nationally 78% of those eligible for FMLA are unable to take an absence because they cannot afford to.

However, we encourage the Committee to amend Section 8 regarding the "opt-in" requirement for employees. Individuals often cannot plan on needing to leave their employment. Additionally, sectors of the workforce may not realize the existence of this stipulation. This may inadvertently discriminate against employees attempting to benefit from this policy.

We also support the expansion of coverage beyond just employees experiencing family violence as outlined in Sec. 22 31-51ss to include victims of sexual assault and dating violence. These victims need the same provisions as family violence victims who take paid and unpaid leave. Victims of sexual assault and dating violence may need to seek medical or psychological counseling for injury or disability; to obtain services for victims; relocation due to violence; or to participate in civil and criminal proceedings.

Thank you for examining this extremely important issue and working to ensure that more employees than ever can and have access to paid family leave.