



**Testimony of
Sharon M. Palmer, Commissioner
Department of Labor
Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 3, 2015**

Good Day Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak, Senator Hwang and Representative Rutigliano and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with testimony regarding **House Bill No. 988 AA Updating the Occupational Health Clinics Statutes**. My name is Sharon Palmer and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Labor.

I am here to speak in support of the Department's bill. The Occupational Health Clinics statutes 31-396 thru 31-403 were promulgated in 1990, nearly 25 years ago. Except for minor editorial and technical changes in 1993 and 1995, these statutes have remained unchanged.

Since the original legislation, there have been substantial advances in the field of occupational medicine and a revision of the statute language is overdue. The previous language did not include "chronic diseases" which is included in this proposed bill. The new language also includes occupationally "related" diseases. The new language also proposes that the grants-in-aid be targeted for populations where health disparities may occur.

The proposed changes should have a limited impact on the day to day operations of the clinics. Stakeholders that include the occupational health clinics, auxiliary occupational health clinics, the Occupational Health Clinic Advisory Committee (DOL, DPH, and WCC are represented on this committee as these three agencies receive funding from this program), organized labor, and DOL staff have met several times over the past several months. The stakeholders have provided significant input into the proposed language changes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.