



Labor and Public Employees Committee

HB 6933: An Act Concerning Predictable Scheduling for Employees, HB 6784: An Act Expanding Paid Sick Leave, HB 6876: An Act Concerning Public Institutions of Higher Education and Collective Bargaining Agreements; and HB 6932: An Act Concerning Paid Family Medical Leave

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My name is Dr. Alice Pritchard and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF). CWEALF is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives. There are many bills that the Committee is hearing today that would benefit women and their families by providing them with economic stability and security.

HB 6933: An Act Concerning Predictable Scheduling for Employees. As the bill suggests with predictable scheduling, families will be able to better balance their work and life commitments. When workers are able to tell employers their exact availability, they can split their time between multiple positions without conflict. Overall, scheduling far in advance and compensating employees when the schedule is modified will allow people to better plan their finances, leading to better economic security.

Many lower-income individuals, for example, may require more than one job in order to survive. However, it very difficult to schedule two jobs if the hours and days of an individual's employment change from week to week without warning. Shifts may overlap or be otherwise impossible to attend. For mothers or other caretakers, unreliable scheduling presents a whole new set of challenges. Scheduling daycare services, arranging for children to get picked up at the bus stop, and making appointments for future pediatric or school visits are difficult when a parent does not know the times or days of the week when they are working.

In addition, HB 6784: An Act Expanding Paid Sick Leave would bring Connecticut's Paid Sick Days legislation in line with current trends while helping women and other caretakers to balance their work and life responsibilities. Connecticut has been a national leader on family and medical leave. A year before the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act, Connecticut had passed its own version of FMLA. In 2011, Connecticut became the first state to have Paid Sick Days legislation. In 2013, Massachusetts passed a paid sick days policy. They are one of the most recent states to implement such a policy, but it is more progressive than the one in place

in Connecticut. Workers in Massachusetts, for example, are eligible for paid sick days if their place of employment has 11 workers, compared to Connecticut's 50 worker minimum. Connecticut's current provisions leave many employees who need sick days behind, especially those employed at small businesses.

If the employee minimum was reduced to 10 in Connecticut, far more employees would be able to take advantage of this program. By changing the limit from 40 (5 days) to 56 hours (7 days), employees would have more flexibility to take time both for themselves and their family members. Parents and caregivers would be able to take two or three sick days for their own illness without worrying about whether or not they have enough left to take care of a child or family member. Finally, expanding the definition of a family member who can be taken care of using paid sick days would allow caretakers (who are often women) to take care of their loved ones in times of crisis without worrying as much about their own financial stability.

At CWEALF we've always had a generous policy of paid sick days. We allow employees to use the time for themselves and their loved ones as is envisioned by this bill. We find that allowing individuals to take the time they need to care for their own illness and/or the health needs of their families, makes them more productive employees and deepens their engagement in the organization. We do this without the legal requirement but know that not all employers do and this law will help extend these important supports to more workers who need it.

We are also in support of **HB 6876: An Act Concerning Public Institutions of Higher Education and Collective Bargaining Agreements** which would allow employees at institutions of higher education to use all of the tools possible to address their cases of harassment or discrimination while still receiving union membership and benefits. In a time of crisis, employees should not have to choose between court protection and their union rights. Instead, let's ensure that victims of sexual harassment can pursue whatever method of arbitration they choose so they can get back to work, protected both by the state and by the union benefits they worked hard to obtain.

Finally, we support **HB 6932: An Act Concerning Paid Family Medical Leave**. A system of paid family and medical leave will provide a critical system for employees when they need the time to care for themselves or a loved one. We adopt and support the separate testimony provided by Catherine Bailey, Chair of the CT Campaign for Paid Family Leave.

In closing, on behalf of CWEALF, I hope that you strongly consider these legislative solutions to problems that employees, and especially female employees, face in the workforce on a daily basis. Thank you for your time and for allowing me to submit testimony today.