



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
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ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

March 5, 2015

Dear Representative Tercyak, Senator Gomes, Representative Rutigliano, Senator Hwang,
honorable Vice Chairs and members of the Labor & Public Employees Committee

I want to testify in support of:

HB 6932 AN ACT CONCERNING PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE

**SB 858 AN ACT CONCERNING EMPLOYEES WHO CUSTOMARILY AND
REGULARLY RECEIVE GRATUITIES AND THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE**

HB 6784 AN ACT EXPANDING PAID SICK LEAVE

**HB 6933 AN ACT CONCERNING PREDICTABLE SCHEDULING FOR
EMPLOYEES.**

In January, President Barack Obama used the State of the Union to call for what he called middle-class economics. The President called for a higher minimum wages for workers, paid sick leave, paid family leave and an employment system that makes it easier for families to handle childcare.

In particular, he noted that "today, we are the only advanced country on Earth that doesn't guarantee paid sick leave or paid maternity leave to our workers."

This year, Connecticut has the opportunity to heed the President's call and take a series of decisive steps to promote real family values and grow our middle class. The legislation before you is both a moral imperative and sound economics.

Paid Family and Medical Leave

Before passage of the Family & Medical Leave Act in 1993, the National Federation of Independent Business called the proposal "the greatest threat... to small business in America," and on behalf of the US Chamber of Commerce the future Virginia Thomas, wife of the Supreme Court Justice, predicted that the legislation would "destroy the flexibility employers and employees need to tailor benefits to their own needs." Despite the perpetual doom and gloom from many of the same forces once again gathered to oppose any effort increase protections for working families, the reality is that the 1990s saw a record period of private sector job growth. Granting families access to family and medical leave makes families more stable and strengthens the bedrock of our society.

The proposal before you is a modest one and legislation that has little impact on employers. To be candid, I would support much stronger action that would give employees greater protections. However it is critical that this state take action to show that we are uninterested in remaining the sole remaining advanced country without a system of paid family leave. I would respectfully ask the Committee however to consider harmonizing aspects of state and federal leave legislation that currently conflict and make compliance needlessly difficult.

However the need exists. Nobody in our state should face financial hardship to have a child, care for an ailing parent, child or loved one. No family is immune from these challenges. As legislators, we receive the same wage regardless of how much time we need to take off for family and medical reasons; it would be reasonable that we afford the same courtesy to the people we have been elected to represent.

One Fair Wage and Predictable Scheduling

Twice in recent years, this committee and this legislature have taken action to raise Connecticut's minimum wage. In doing so we perpetuated a two-tiered system, one in which all workers are guaranteed a standard minimum wage except for one class of workers, overwhelmingly female, and many of whom are single mothers: servers and bartenders. They earn a cash wage of only \$5.78 per hour.

The restaurant industry should follow the same rules as every other industry by paying its workers fairly. Tipped restaurant and bar workers constitute one of the largest and lowest paid sectors in our economy and there is not one good reason to perpetuate this second-class of workers.

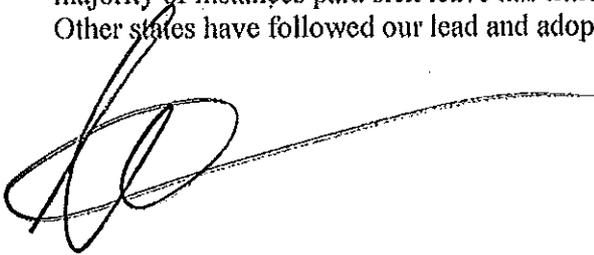
You will hear doom and gloom from industry about how paying workers fairly will kill jobs, ensure surly service or end tipping. Anybody who has visited the West Coast will know that is nonsensical. California, like many Western states, has no tip credit - all workers are guaranteed the minimum wage - and yet in 2013 the Wall Street Journal proclaimed San Francisco the Culinary Capital of the United States. In fact, the United States is the only country in the world which has a separate minimum wage for tipped workers.

Predictable scheduling would allow hard working low wage workers to coordinate child care, take classes in their spare time or work another job. Unpredictable scheduling throws chaos into children's lives and lowers wages and our gross state product.

Expanding Paid Sick Leave

In 2011, Connecticut led the nation in adopting paid sick leave legislation. Out of an abundance of caution, in the face of fears that paid sick leave would be a job killer, the legislature chose to limit the scope of the sick leave mandate.

In the intervening years, overwhelming empirical evidence has accumulated that in the vast majority of instances paid sick leave has little or no negative impact on Connecticut businesses. Other states have followed our lead and adopted stronger laws. We should follow suit.

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