STATE OF CONNECTICUT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JOE ARESIMOWICZ
HOUSE MAJORITY LEADER

Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak and Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. I am Representative Joe Aresimowicz of the 30th District serving Berlin and Southington. I am here today to testify in support of HB 5591: AN ACT CREATING THE CONNECTICUT RETIREMENT SECURITY PROGRAM.

This bill is the product of almost two years of research and study by the Connecticut Retirement Security Board, under the direction of the State Comptroller and State Treasurer. I want to thank that Board again for their work, and thank this committee for your continued work on this issue.

I think we have all heard some of these statistics:

- More than 600,000 Connecticut workers who do not have access to a retirement plan through their employer;
- 25% of current seniors in Connecticut are living in poverty;
- 79% of Connecticut small business owners believe the state should do more to encourage residents to save for retirement.

But what I was surprised by when Senator Looney and I held our Roundtable on Retirement Security back in 2013, was the number of constituents and friends who came over to me in checkout line at the supermarket, on the basketball court at the gym, in the parking lot outside of school when I picked my kids up to tell me about how nervous they are about their own retirements. These are middle-aged, two-income earning families. Those whom we want to think of as being ok. But even for many of them, the promise of spending golden years on a beach and relaxing with grandchildren is just a dream now.

For me as a state legislator that is not the scary part though. The scary part is the cost of inaction. We are in the middle of a very challenging budget season. Those of you on the Appropriations Committee are looking closely at every line-item. One thing that you all know is that the amount we need to spend on providing food assistance, heating assistance, and health care for low-income elderly citizens is going up.

This bill is rooted in a conservative idea: help working people save their own money. There is no entitlement here. If a worker chooses not to save, he or she will not have savings when they look to retire. But if we can help a fraction of those 600,000 who are not currently saving have a little money in the bank when they can no longer work, we will help them enjoy their senior years and save money for future taxpayers as well.

Obviously, this is not just a Connecticut issue. Since we started looking at this in Connecticut, we have seen other states pass legislation similar to the bill before the Committee today. We

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have also seen President Obama and the federal Department of Labor make this a priority. I think now is the time for Connecticut to act.

Thank you for your consideration.