



Council 4 AFSCME Testimony, Labor Committee, March 8, 2016

My name is Brian Anderson. I am a legislative and political representative for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 35,000 Connecticut public and private employee members.

Council 4 is supportive of SB 221, An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave. There is strong evidence that many of our fellow citizens cannot take family and medical leave when their families need them to because they cannot afford to go unpaid even for a few weeks. Paid leave allows people to do this through a small financial assist, considerably less than their normal salaries.

A missing element in the bill is some financial assistance from employers. Paid leave benefits employers by keeping workers mentally and physically healthy and able to perform their tasks. A UCLA survey of employers has found that they believe that paid leave had a positive effect, or no negative effect, on their businesses. **We urge the committee to include some substantial employer financial contribution towards a paid leave model – at least bearing half of the cost along with the employees.**

We hear much in the State Capitol about the difficulties business face. The state should help to foster a healthy, growing economy for business owners when it can. It has already done much in this direction. But an economy is built on capital and labor. What has been neglected too often in public policy is alleviating the difficulty that working families face. The state of the working family is in far more peril than that of commerce. The U.S. Census Bureau recently reported that fifty percent of all American families are now “working poor” or less in financial status. The U.S. Federal Reserve reported last year that the average American family has lost forty percent of its accumulated wealth since 2007. The Southern Education Foundation has recently found that more than 50% of public school children are eligible for the free lunch allowed to poor families. The working family is in a state of crisis.

Paid leave helps families at a moment when care for a loved one is desperately needed. Having family members care for a sick relative can lessen the cost of government programs which otherwise might have to step in. Research shows that allowing parents time to bond with a newly arrived child can result in far better outcomes for that child's future life

Council 4 strongly opposes privatizing administration of a paid family leave program. Clearly, this is in the purview of the Department of Labor. We are stunned that the commissioner would suggest privatizing this out. Who would administer such a program otherwise? Would a whole new "paid family leave authority" be created? If so, it would be more costly than having DOL administer it. DOL's stance is disturbing and leads us to wonder in light of last year's layoffs and this year's proposed budget cuts if there is not an attempt to dismantle the DOL.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.