



**Public Hearing Testimony of  
Scott Jackson, Commissioner  
Department of Labor  
Labor and Public Employees Committee  
March 8, 2016**

Good Afternoon Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak, Senator Hwang, Representative Rutigliano and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with testimony regarding **Senate Bill No. 221, AAC PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE**. My name is Scott Jackson and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Labor.

The Department of Labor (DOL) supports the concept of the proposed bill, which would create a family and medical leave compensation program for all Connecticut workers. A paid family and medical leave compensation program would help working families take time off for caregiving responsibilities, as well as their own medical needs, without putting their economic security at risk. We are supportive of this goal and acknowledge the needs of workers to balance work and family obligations.

This proposed bill seeks to achieve two main objectives: (1) greatly expand the state's current Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to include all employers with 2 or more employees in CT (currently it only covers employers with 75 or more employees in CT) and to allow employees to take FMLA leave for children over 18 years of age, grandparents, grandchildren, and siblings (currently the law only covers leave for the employee him/herself, spouses, children under 18 years of age or over 18 years of age in certain circumstances, parents and parent-in-laws); (2) create and maintain a state run Family and Medical Leave Compensation program.

The first objective will create substantial additional work for DOL, as essentially all public and private employers in CT will be covered and employees will be able to take FMLA leave to care for most any family member. As DOL now handles all inquiries and complaints for alleged violations of the FMLA law, the number of such inquiries and complaints will increase proportionately to the numbers of employers and employees that will now be covered by the law.

The second objective would require DOL to create and administer a program by which Connecticut workers could receive compensation, similar to disability insurance, for a leave of absence from work that qualifies under the Connecticut FMLA (i.e., for oneself or a family member). DOL does not currently have the infrastructure for such a program and cannot piggyback off of the unemployment compensation system for such a project, as that is financed by federal funds and restricted by federal law. Therefore, DOL would need to develop a new information technology system. DOL would also need to develop the processes to administer the program, which would include determining employee contribution levels and collection methods, eligibility, benefit distribution, and complaint procedures, as well as create an outreach campaign.

Finally, the proposal requires DOL to submit an annual report to the legislature on the program.

Although, this proposal is well intentioned, DOL does not have the additional staff and start-up funding to implement and operate this program. Therefore, DOL must respectfully oppose this legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.