



# Connecticut

Labor and Public Employees Committee

March 8, 2018

Testimony of AARP in Support of

## H.B. 5044 AN ACT CONCERNING FAIR TREATMENT OF SICK WORKERS

AARP is a nonpartisan, social mission organization with an age 50+ membership of nearly 38 million nationwide, and approximately 600,000 members here in Connecticut. We fight for issues that matter most to older adults and their families such as healthcare, family caregiving and retirement security, and today we express our strong support for paid sick leave for family caregivers.

AARP strongly supports H.B. 5044, An Act Concerning Fair Treatment of Sick Workers, which will strengthen Connecticut's sick time laws and extend coverage for family caregivers taking care of an aging parent. For many of AARP's approximately 600,000 members across Connecticut, they have little ability to take time from work to address the health and safety concerns for themselves or a loved one.

This issue will become more acute as Connecticut's population continues to age. As many on this Committee are aware, Connecticut is facing serious pressures when it comes to providing the appropriate level of caregiving to our seniors. More often than not that burden falls upon family members to act as a caregiver, a burden which family members take on out of love. In fact, one national AARP survey found that nearly two-third of workers 45-74 provide care giving for a spouse, partner, relative or friend, and that 74% of adults that provide caregiving have been in the workforce at some point while having caregiving responsibilities. However, too often family members are asked to carry that burden in the face of unavoidable economic pressures. To put it bluntly, working people in our state are being presented with the choice of providing care to their loved one, or working to support their family. Instead, we as a State should be providing the ability for Connecticut families to both fulfill their obligations as a caregiver AND continue their paid work responsibilities.

H.B. 5044 provides such flexibility by enhancing and strengthening Connecticut sick leave law. Connecticut was the first in the nation to offer a paid sick leave policy, but since then other states have followed and offered, in many cases, even stronger protections and coverage. H.B. 5044 is especially critical to family caregivers taking care of aging parents, who are not currently protected by Connecticut's earned sick time law.

However, this is not just a benefit for the caregiver and their loved ones. Those individuals that are being forced to come to work while they are sick themselves or are worried about caring for

a sick loved one, are causing a strain on economic production. For instance, national numbers show a dramatic loss in productivity for those workers who merely “present” at work despite being ill or worried about the inability to care for a loved one causing such workers to have a hard time focusing on their jobs, or being distracted by their family concerns. It is estimated that such “presenteeism” costs employers nationally an estimated \$160 billion a year in lost productivity, which is twice the amount lost for absenteeism. Consequently, providing such time to employees should be seen as an economic benefit, not a drag.

Ultimately, H.B. 5044 would provide peace of mind for those in Connecticut who are caring for loved ones throughout this state. That is why AARP-CT, representing approximately 600,000 members in Connecticut, supports its prompt passage. Thank you for your work on this important piece of legislation.