



**Public Hearing Testimony of
Scott Jackson, Commissioner
Department of Labor
Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 8, 2018**

Good Afternoon Senator Gomes, Senator Miner, Representative Porter, Representative Bocchino and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with testimony regarding **House Bill No. 5044, AA Concerning Fair Treatment of Sick Workers**. My name is Scott Jackson and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Labor.

The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) supports this proposed bill. In 2011, under Governor Malloy's leadership, Connecticut became the first state in the nation to require private sector employers to provide paid sick leave to their employees. Since that time, eight states and Washington, D.C., as well as a number of municipalities, have also passed paid sick leave laws to protect workers. The proposed bill would update Connecticut's law to align with policies passed in those other states, including neighboring states, and provide more workers with paid sick days.

Workers should not have to choose between their job and their health or the health of their family members. Robust paid sick leave policies promote productivity and employee retention, and enable workers to recover from illness more quickly while not spreading that illness to their co-workers and the public. Currently, the law covers only a limited number of CT workers. Specifically, the law covers employers with 50 or more employees in Connecticut and those specifically listed as service workers in the law, which is a list of 69 job classifications. This leaves thousands of vulnerable workers without any paid time off at all. The proposed bill seeks to close these gaps by covering employers with 20 or more employees in CT and repeals the service worker limitation to allow all hourly workers to accrue sick time.

The proposed bill also seeks to close the loophole whereby multiple operations of a single employer can report as individual employers, thereby falling under the employee threshold for coverage. Just like with the Family and Medical Leave Act, the bill utilizes the "integrated employer" test for determining covered employers. Moreover, the proposed bill would protect those employees already deemed eligible for sick leave when their employer acquired by a "successor-in-interest," allowing them to retain accrued sick time. These proposed changes

align with the benefits provided by other jurisdictions and provides protections to the workers who need it most.

The proposed bill also acknowledges that many families need time off to care for a parent or older child (up to the age of 26) by allowing the use of paid sick time. The current law only provides for children under 18 years of age. The proposal further adds additional uses of paid sick time. Specifically, for bonding with a newborn, newly adopted or newly placed foster child; when the employee's child, spouse or parent is a victim of family violence or sexual assault; and when the employee's place of employment or child's school or place of care is closed by public health officials due to public health emergency.

Finally, the proposed bill recognizes that even those workers at employers with less than 20 employees need protected sick time even if it would be too burdensome to require those employers to provide paid time. The proposed bill would allow employees up to 40 hours per year of unpaid sick time to care for themselves and their families.

Ultimately, these proposed changes provide a much needed upgrade to Connecticut's paid sick laws and ensure that workers have stability and security in their jobs and can take sick time when needed without fear of reprisal or lack of a paycheck. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.