

I wish to express my concern about the proposed bills SB-01 and HB-5003, "An act concerning paid family and medical leave". Specifically my concerns are as follows:

The administrative staff of the company I own consists of three full-time and one part-time employee, so the absence of just one of them constitutes a twenty-eight percent reduction in our administrative capacity. So as I see it, I would have three options under this bill:

1. Expand the hours of the part time person (who has limited knowledge of the administrative part of our business) which would immediately make that person eligible for the same benefit package that we offer our full time employees while at the same time paying all the benefits for the absent employee, or
2. Incur the overtime costs that would result from placing the additional administrative burden on our two remaining full-time employees while at the same time continuing to pay all the benefits for the absent employee, or
3. Hire a replacement for the period of time (up to twelve weeks, twenty-four in the case of an active military situation) that the employee will be absent while at the same time paying all the benefits for the absent employee. We operate our company with a proprietary software program, so it is virtually impossible to bring in a replacement without prior training, so there WILL BE a cost to our company above and beyond the continuation of the benefits for the absent employee. And I ask you, in this period of historically low unemployment, who is going to take a job that they know is going to end no later than twelve weeks out, and how long do you think they're likely to stay in that job if an offer of permanent employment comes along in the interim. And we would be lucky to receive notice of them leaving; these days, as often as not, they simply stop showing up.

I also see two areas of discrimination in this bill. Why does an employee only have to be employed for twelve months to be eligible, yet an individual who is self-employed (an entrepreneur) must wait three years after applying for eligibility? And of course, you've exempted state and local municipalities as well as schools systems from this obligation; yet another classic example of the government taking the position that, "It's OK for the private sector to bear this obligation, it's just too much for us." The hypocrisy of this exemption is really something to behold. Practice what you preach!

I also note that in one section of the bill it states that the amount deducted from the employee weekly earnings, "shall not exceed one-half of one per cent", yet later in the bill it allows for limitless increases in the deduction amount in order to keep the fund solvent. Which is it? Anyone who has witnessed the growth in the cost of government in our state knows where this is going, and I can easily foresee the day when the legislature decides that it's really unfair to ask the employees to contribute anything more and an employer contribution is enacted. And

speaking of cost, what will be cost to the taxpayers of administering this program, and given the deficits we're facing, can we really afford it? Additionally, if there is to be a cap on what an employee can collect, there also needs to be a cap on the dollar amount contributed by an employee as opposed to the same percentage for all. Anything short of this is nothing less than yet another redistribution of wealth.

Including as a family member, "an individual related by blood or whose close association with an employee is the equivalent of a family member" combined with what today are so opened ended descriptions of "mental health" issues renders this program ripe for abuse. I can easily see an employee dismissed for cause rounding up a close friend and using this benefit as an alternative to unemployment compensation.

Lastly, there is little question in my mind that the passage of this bill under the present economic conditions will further cement Connecticut's reputation as being a business unfriendly state, and we simply cannot afford that.

Sincerely yours,

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