

PA12-043

SB0150

House	6342-6344	3
Labor & Public Employees	442-452, 476-482, 483- 484, 494-496, 529-555, 557-558	152
<u>Senate</u>	<u>1934-1947, 2033-2035</u>	<u>17</u>
		172

H – 1141

**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2012**

**VOL.55
PART 19
6188 – 6484**

smj/law/djp/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

584
May 4, 2012

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The Bill is passed in concurrence.

Mr. Clerk, 473.

THE CLERK:

On Page 32, Calendar 473, substitute for Senate Bill Number 150, AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES.

Favorable report by the Committee on Appropriations.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Distinguished Chairman of the Labor Committee,
Representative Zalaski.

REP. ZALASKI (81st):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move for acceptance of the Joint Committee's favorable report and passage of the Bill in concurrence with the Senate.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Question is on acceptance and passage in concurrence. Will you explain the Bill, please sir?

REP. ZALASKI (81st):

Yes, Mr. Speaker, thank you. The Bill reduces the number of work hours school paraprofessionals in educational settings need to qualify for unpaid family medical leave from 1,250 hours to 950 hours.

smj/law/djp/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

585
May 4, 2012

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Will you remark further on the Bill?

Representative Rigby.

REP. RIGBY (63rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker this Bill goes a long way to give a benefit to a group of people that have struggled in the recent economic down turn and I think it's a good measure and I urge my colleagues to vote in the affirmative. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Thank you, sir.

Will you remark further on the Bill? Will you remark further on the Bill?

If not, staff and guests please come to the well of the House. Members take your seats. The machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll call. Members to the chamber. The House is taking a roll call vote. Members to the chamber please.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Have all the members voted? Have all the members voted? If so, the machine will be locked and the Clerk will take a tally.

smj/law/djp/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

586
May 4, 2012

And, the Clerk will announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Senate Bill 150, in concurrence with the Senate.

Total number voting	141
Necessary for adoption	71
Those voting Yea	132
Those voting Nay	9
Those absent and not voting	10

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The Bill is passed in concurrence.

Clerk please call calendar 390.

THE CLERK:

On Page 20, Calendar 390, House Bill Number 5512,

AN ACT CONCERNING THE REPORTING OF A MISSING CHILD.

Favorable report by the Committee on the Judiciary.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The distinguished Chairman of the Judiciary
Committee, Representative Fox.

REP. FOX (148th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move for the
acceptance of the Joint Committee's favorable report
and passage of the Bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Question is on acceptance and passage. Will you

S - 641

**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2012**

**VOL. 55
PART 6
1633 - 1960**

pat/med/gbr
SENATE

8
April 27, 2012

Moving, Madam President, to Calendar Page 33, Calendar 287, Substitute for Senate Bill Number 1 is marked go.

Calendar 295, Substitute for Senate Bill Number 248 is marked go.

And that concludes the markings at this time, Madam President, but there may be additional markings a little bit later on.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Mr. Clerk, please start with the first marking of the day.

THE CLERK:

On Page 26, Calendar 86, Substitute for Senate Bill Number 150 AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES. Favorable Report of the Committee on Appropriations.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Prague. Good afternoon, ma'am. Good to see you again.

SENATOR PRAGUE:

Thank you, Madam President. Good to see you, too. Madam President, I move the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

The motion is on adoption and passage. Will you remark?

SENATOR PRAGUE:

Thank you, Madam President. The bill before us allows the paraprofessionals in our school systems the right to access the federal FMLA benefit.

The federal Family and Medical Leave Benefit as is drafted requires 1250 hours of work in the previous 12 months and even though paras work full time, they

pat/med/gbr
SENATE

9
April 27, 2012

don't get any credit for, you know, holidays or vacation time, snow days, so consequently they work less than 1250 hours and are denied the family and medical leave benefit.

This bill would reduce the required hours to 950 and allow them, like the rest of the employees, to access the Family and Medical Leave Benefit.

We all have concerns about if we get sick or someone we love gets sick and we need to be there with them, that our job will be at risk. But under the Family and Medical Leave Benefit you don't get paid for the 12 weeks that you have, for 12 weeks a year for two years you don't get paid but your job is secure so that you'd be able to take the time to take care of yourself or a loved one and know that when you're ready to come back to work your job will be here.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark further? Will you remark further?
Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Thank you, Madam President. Good morning.

THE CHAIR:

No, good afternoon, ma'am.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Thank you. I rise in support of this legislation. I have met with many of my paraprofessionals in my legislative district and talked with them about this particular piece.

Of course, what they would like to do is what we all would like to do and that is to be able to take care of our loved ones if they become sick, and also be able to do the normal customary things that many of us are entitled to under the FMLA. And after talking with them, I understood that this would be able to have them retain their job.

pat/med/gbr
SENATE

10
April 27, 2012

You know, paraprofessionals do so many things in our classrooms to help our students and they even in many cases, I believe, go above and beyond perhaps what normally a teacher would do, if you will, because they assist in so many personal ways and make sure that the teacher can do his or her job correctly.

So I do hope the Chamber will vote in favor of this legislation and I thank the Chair of the Labor Committee for bringing it before us. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark further? Senator Suzio.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Thank you, Madam President. It's good to see you again today.

THE CHAIR:

Same here, sir.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Today you might be treated to a rare spectacle.

THE CHAIR:

Are you going to agree?

SENATOR SUZIO:

Senator Suzio debating Senator Suzio.

THE CHAIR:

Oh, okay.

SENATOR SUZIO:

And the reason why I say that is, I am torn about this particular bill. I do applaud the intent and the benefits that it would provide. But I also am torn by the fact that as a former board of ed member for 14 years in Meriden, I also kind of bristle at the idea

pat/med/gbr
SENATE

11
April 27, 2012

of another mandate coming down from the state and being imposed on local boards of education about a decision that they could very well make themselves without coercion from the state.

As far as I know, any board of ed right now is free to offer the benefits of the Family Medical Leave Act to any employee under even more relaxed conditions.

So I'm back and forth in my own head thinking about this because I would certainly prefer to leave the decision to the local people who must implement it and who are in the communities and understand the unique needs of their communities and their employees.

But if I may, through you, Madam President, to help me learn and educate myself a little further and help myself make the decision I'm going to make about how I'm going to vote on this bill, I'd like to ask the proponent a few questions if I may, through you.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed. Senator Prague, prepare yourself.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Thank you, Madam President. Through you, first of all, my understanding is that this bill would, it talks about certain municipal employees, but those municipal employees are strictly employees who are employed by local boards of education? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Prague.

SENATOR PRAGUE:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President to Senator Suzio. Senator Suzio, we had this same debate in the Appropriations Committee meeting, and I told you at that time that I, too, served on my local board of education and boards of education don't always deal with issues in the way they need to be dealt with.

pat/med/gbr
SENATE

12
April 27, 2012

This is a glitch in the federal law and it is up to us as the State Legislature to make this correction. These folks deal, as Senator Gerratana said, with some of the most difficult students in our classrooms, because that's their job.

This bill doesn't cost the municipality anything. It just gives these paraprofessional employees the same benefit as the other municipal employees have and it does it by reducing the number of hours to 950 instead of the 1250 that's required.

So, through you, Madam President, to Senator Suzio, the boards of education, and I having been a member on the board, don't always deal with the issues that need to be dealt with, and it's up to us as a State Legislature to take care of the need of the citizens of this state. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Suzio.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Thank you. And again, if I may, through you, Madam President. I notice in the fiscal note that the Office of Fiscal Analysis observed there's 37,000 school paraprofessionals and 12,000 are already eligible for family medical leave benefits.

Through you, Madam President, I would like to ask the good Senator why about one-third of currently employed paraprofessionals in our school systems are eligible and two-thirds are not? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Prague.

SENATOR PRAGUE:

Madam President, through you to Senator Suzio. Senator Suzio, maybe some boards did take care of this problem and others did not. However, there are 25,000 paraprofessionals' that do not have the benefit of the FMLA system, and it's up to us to help these 25,000

pat/med/gbr
SENATE

13
April 27, 2012

people in our state to access the benefit that everybody else has.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Senator Suzio.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Thank you. And again, through you, Madam President, if I may. I just want to make sure I understand the benefit that would be provided.

My understanding is it would be unpaid leave and I would like to ask a) is it unpaid leave and number two, is it for a, is there a maximum period of time within which the paraprofessionals would have to return to work or lose the benefit? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Prague.

SENATOR PRAGUE:

Through you, Madam President. Senator Suzio, it is an unpaid benefit. They only get 12 weeks a year for two years, and at the end of that time they have to come back to work. It is completely unpaid.

The benefit of the program is that their job is held for them.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Suzio.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Thank you. Through you, Madam President, again, if I understood the good Senator, it's 12 weeks per year? No? Maybe I could clarify that. Two weeks?

SENATOR PRAGUE:

Two years.

pat/med/gbr
SENATE

14
April 27, 2012

SENATOR SUZIO:

I'm sorry?

THE CHAIR:

Twelve weeks in two years, sir.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Oh, okay. I'm sorry. I'm getting it now. Thank you.

When someone has used the benefit, do they have to re-earn it when they return to work, because there is a requirement that they have to have worked so many hours in the previous year. If they have not met that qualification after having returned, do they have to wait to qualify again? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Prague.

SENATOR PRAGUE:

Madam President, it's my understanding that it's 12 weeks a year for two years. The state has an FMLA benefit that is 16 weeks in two years. But this is for the federal FMLA, which is only for two years and it's twelve weeks a year.

And what was Senator Suzio's additional question?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Suzio.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Through you, Madam President, my question was, if somebody has taken advantage of the benefits and has now returned to work, and because they took advantage of their benefits they're below the 950 hour threshold specified in the bill, they would have to wait at least another year, I presume before they'd be qualified for the same benefits again?

pat/med/gbr
SENATE

15
April 27, 2012

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Prague.

SENATOR PRAGUE:

Madam President, Senator Suzio, you have to work 1250 hours in the previous 12 months in order to access the FMLA. You have to work 950 hours in the previous 12 months.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Right. I mean, my understanding is, it's 900, this act is lowering the threshold from 1250 hours to 950 hours, if I understand it correctly? Through you, Madam President, is that correct?

SENATOR PRAGUE:

Yes. Through you, Madam President to Senator Suzio, that is correct.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Thank you. And again, through you, Madam President, how was the 950 hours determined as the appropriate threshold? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Prague.

SENATOR PRAGUE:

Through you, Madam President. Senator Suzio, they work on an hourly basis. They don't get credit for the snow days or the vacation days or the holidays. They have to work the hours in the classroom and they have to put in 950 hours in the previous 12 months. They don't get this for nothing. They have to earn it, Senator Suzio.

SENATOR SUZIO:

pat/med/gbr
SENATE

16
April 27, 2012

Through you, Madam President, I asked the specifics about why the 950 hours, because I did some inquiring and I asked the superintendent of schools in my home district, Meriden, about this and he said it wouldn't affect them because their paraprofessionals work five hours a day for 180 days a year for 900 hours. So this legislation wouldn't help out any of the paraprofessionals in his district at all.

And I was just wondering why 950 hours was the threshold number that would trigger eligibility when it might omit thousands of paraprofessionals who are the intended beneficiaries? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Prague.

SENATOR PRAGUE:

Through you, Madam President. Senator Suzio, this is the number of hours that were asked for by the proponents of this legislation.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Suzio.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Okay. And again, through you, Madam President, I do applaud the intent and the fact that it costs little or nothing. It certainly makes it appealing.

But, from what I can determine from, again, my research, it may not affect that many people and I don't know why, I was just wondering again what the reason was for the 950 hours that have been selected when I know there are hundreds of paraprofessionals in my school district that won't benefit from this.

So if the proponent doesn't know how it was computed, I know this, that the superintendent of schools in my district said that they work, that most paraprofessionals work five hours a day and there's 180 school days in the school year, ergo, they usually

pat/med/gbr
SENATE

17
April 27, 2012

work 900 or slightly fewer hours per year, so they would not be covered by the threshold within this act as I understand it. Is that a correct understanding? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Prague.

SENATOR PRAGUE:

Through you, Madam President, Senator Suzio, their hours and pay are determined by collective bargaining and paraprofessionals work anywhere from five and a quarter hours a day to six and a half hours per day, so it varies. But it's determined by collective bargaining.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Suzio.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Thank you. And that will lead me to my last question, Madam President, which is, as far as I know, there is nothing to prevent any school district from voluntarily doing this right now or incorporating it in the collective bargaining process, and my question therefore is, why would we leave it to the collective bargaining process rather than impose it from here when the people who live in these school districts, live in the communities where the people are employed. They are their friends and their neighbors. Why wouldn't they be better judges of whether this should be a benefit provided or not? Through you, Madam President, and why shouldn't we leave it to the collective bargaining process?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Prague.

SENATOR PRAGUE:

Through you, Madam President. Senator Suzio, the teachers' wags and hours that they work is the subject

pat/med/gbr
SENATE

18
April 27, 2012

of collective bargaining, so the collective bargaining also is involved with determining the hours and the pay that the paraprofessionals get and the hours that they work.

This is part of collective bargaining in the municipalities.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Suzio.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Thank you, Madam President. I don't have any more questions for the proponent of the bill. I do point out based on her own last words that normally this is properly incorporated in the collective bargaining process and every school district in the state and every board in the state are free to lower the threshold if they want it down to 500 hours, or 800 hours.

And again, one of my reservations, while I applaud and I like the idea of extending these benefits to paraprofessionals, I'm torn by the fact that we're imposing, we're coercing local boards of ed to do this by this act.

And I'm wondering, based on just the inquiry I've done whether it's really going to achieve the intended ends anyway, given that many paraprofessionals may not even work the required 950 threshold hours that are within the proposed bill.

So I want to thank the proponent for her patience while I asked questions and again, I'm listening with great interest to the debate as it proceeds on this bill and I'm listening with an open mind and trying to make up my mind. I'm weighing these two competing concerns of mine. Thank you very much, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Witkos.

pat/med/gbr
SENATE

19
April 27, 2012

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you, Madam President. I rise with very strong support of the bill that's before us today. Having served also on my local board of education for five years, I'm very well attuned and aware of the role that a paraprofessional plays in our local school districts.

Most oftentimes they are given the crummiest jobs. They are the lowest paid and they have at times the most difficult jobs, dealing with students, needy students in the classrooms, whether it be one-on-one or covering three or four students in a classroom.

And while we may look at a fiscal note and see that there is a minimal cost associated with that, imagine if we didn't have the paraprofessionals in our classrooms today, exorbitant costs it would be to education because we'd have to find other alternatives to help these students.

And being a parent of a student that utilizes a paraprofessional, it's enabled my daughter to be mainstreamed, and I think all kids should have that right to be in a classroom with student their own age and experience the education that's delivered by regular classroom teachers and it boosts them up in more ways that it's imaginable than just from a teacher-student perspective.

My, I do understand your concern about being a local collective bargaining issue. However, the state statute has set the bar that you must work 1250 hours. Collective bargaining between the local board of education and that union can't change state law. That's our job. We have to do that, and that's what we're proposing to do today to make sure that the paraprofessional group avails themselves of the benefit that they've collectively bargained for and that's available to all other employees in the school district. It's that simple.

If the school day is only five or six hours a day, that's generally all that a paraprofessional works, so they cannot avail themselves to this benefit.

pat/med/gbr
SENATE

20
April 27, 2012

And when we're talking about a benefit, we're talking about being able to stay home and take care of a loved one or if you're sick, or to, and I'll call this save a life, because there's a provision that says you can be an organ donor or a bone marrow donor and that's a life-saving benefit for someone.

And it just says, you know what, feel free to go home and take care of your family and you will be guaranteed you'll have a job when you get back.

People are not banging down the doors saying I want to be a paraprofessional. I want to be a paraprofessional, but in those instances, we should make sure that they feel that they can do what they need to do to take care of that loved one.

So I just want to reiterate two points that I think came up during the debate. Number one, we as a Legislature has to reduce the number in law that says they can avail themselves. That can't be done through collective bargaining because it's already in statute.

And number two, the cost savings that we realize today in every municipal budget by allowing the great performance of the paraprofessionals that work tirelessly throughout our day.

Oftentimes it's the paraprofessionals that are communicating with the parents about their students that are assigned to them, their progress.

Speak to any parent that has a child that utilizes a paraprofessional and they'll tell you they're on a first-name basis and they don't just communicate during the day. We talk about the teaching profession, how it's not just a Monday through Friday, 7:30 to 2:30 in the afternoon profession. They, like the teachers, think of these students all day and all night and worry about what happens because they feel like they're part of the family.

So with that, Madam President, I urge the Chamber's strong support. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

pat/med/gbr
SENATE

21
April 27, 2012

Thank you. Will you remark? Will you remark? If not, Senator Prague.

SENATOR PRAGUE:

Madam President, thank you. If there is no objection, I'd like to ask that this be placed on the Consent Calendar,

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, I guess, so ordered.

SENATOR PRAGUE:

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK;

On Page 11, Calendar 338, Senate Bill Number 194 AN ACT CONCERNING THE POSTPONEMENT OF JURY DUTY FOR BREAST-FEEDING MOTHERS. Favorable Report of the Committee on Judiciary.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I move acceptance of the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

On acceptance and passage. Will you remark?

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Yes, Madam President. The Clerk has in his possession an amendment and it is LCO 4073. If he will call, and I be allowed to summarize.

S - 642

**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2012**

**VOL. 55
PART 7
1961 - 2275**

pat/med/gbr
SENATE

107
April 27, 2012

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Will you remark? Will you remark? All in favor, then I'll ask the Chamber, all in favor of Amendment "A", please say Aye.

SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Opposed? Amendment "A" passes. Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes, thank you. Thank you, Madam President. I would move that Senate Bill 368, Calendar 320 as amended be referred to the Committee on Labor and Public Employees.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir. Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, if the Clerk would now call those items on the Consent Calendar, and if we might move to a vote on the First Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On Page 26, Calendar 86, Senate Bill 150.

Page 11, Calendar 338, Senate Bill 194.

Page 12, Calendar 353, Senate Bill 366.

Page 27, Calendar 107, Senate Bill 218.

pat/med/gbr
SENATE

108
April 27, 2012

On Page 29, Calendar 138, Senate Bill Number 27.

Page 26, Calendar 88, Senate Bill 55.

On Page 34, Calendar 311, Senate Bill 101.

On Page 9, Calendar 321, Senate Bill 414.

On Page 1, Calendar Number 63, Senate Bill 227.

On Page 5, Calendar 225, Senate Bill 410.

And on Page 11, Calendar 332, Senate Bill 341.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes, Madam President, if we might wait just a moment.
We needed to verify a couple of items before the
Consent Calendar is voted.

THE CHAIR:

Absolutely, sir.

THE CLERK:

And there is one more item. On Page 33, Calendar 295,
Senate Bill Number 248.

THE CHAIR:

Are any other additions or corrections that we can
see? If not, then Mr. Clerk, will you please call for
a roll call vote and the machine will be opened on the
Consent Calendar.

THE CLERK:

An immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
Senators please return to the Chamber. Immediate roll
call has been ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

pat/med/gbr
SENATE

109
April 27, 2012

Have all members voted? If all members voted the machine will be locked. Mr. Clerk, will you please call the tally on the Consent Calendar.

THE CLERK:

On today's Consent Calendar.

Total number voting	35
Necessary for passage	18
Those voting Yea	35
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	1

THE CHAIR:

The Consent Calendar passes.

Right now I ask for points of personal privilege.
Senator McKinney.

SENATOR MCKINNEY:

Thank you, Madam President. I rise for a point of personal privilege.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR MCKINNEY:

Madam President, on my way up to the Capitol this morning I learned the sad news of the passing of a good friend, Jo McKenzie, who many of us in the circle, especially those of us who belong to the Republican Party, affectionately knew Joe McKenzie as Momma Jo.

I first met Momma Jo in the early 1970s as a young boy. She was always active in the Republican Party. In 1979 she was the first woman ever elected Chairman of the Connecticut Republican Party and for probably 15 years plus, served as Republican National Committee Woman from the State of Connecticut.

She was a wonderful woman, always with a laugh and fun, had an incredible sense of style as you may know.

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**LABOR AND
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
PART 2
306 – 605**

2012

1
slj/gbr LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES March 1, 2012
COMMITTEE 2:00 P.M.

CHAIRMEN: Senator Prague
Representative Zalaski

MEMBERS PRESENT:

SENATORS: Guglielmo

REPRESENTATIVES: Santiago, Rigby, Aman,
Esposito, Hewett, Kiner,
Miner

REP. ZALASKI: Good afternoon, everybody. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm glad to see that everybody made it here safely. The weather was a little frightful earlier. Senator Prague is on her way, but we wanted to get started. We had a late meeting on Tuesday and we'd like to get this one going on time, sort of.

We're going to start with Natasha. You're first. Thank you. Good to see you.

NATASHA PIERRE: It's good to be first. I just got out of Human Services where I'm fourth, and I'm still waiting.

But I'm Natasha Pierre from the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, and I'm here today to talk about Senate Bill 150, which would grant paraprofessionals the right to family and medical leave, public and elementaries and secondary schools paraprofessionals.

Right now families incur anywhere between \$300 to \$6900, depending on if they're taking care of their selves or their ill family members during the process, and that's due to lost wages, the time they have to take off because they have no FMLA coverage. Nearly 40 percent of workers are not eligible under FMLA because

COMMITTEE

they work for businesses with fewer than 50 employees or their hours are restricted in such a way that the employee never meets the FMLA threshold.

Additionally, the occupations that continue to deny FMLA benefits to its employees are occupations that are female dominated such as the paraprofessionals addressed in this bill.

As you are aware, we are very concerned about working women needing to take care of their families and themselves, but also now we have the big sandwich generation that's also taking care of their parents. Women represent about two-thirds of the adults providing substantial assistance to elderly parents. They provide an annual average of about \$1500 in income to their parents, and they also spend about 23 hours a week caring for their parents, their elderly parents.

So, according to the paraprofessionals union, right now the United Electrical Union, Local 22, they work 6.25 hours a day which is about 1125 hours a year, rather than the required 1250 hours needed to be eligible for FMLA. They are not allowed to work more than 6.25 hours a day and we believe they shouldn't be penalized for that in cases that they have illness. All FMLA does is provide employment guarantees after you take your time off, your unpaid time off. And we think this group, this huge population, should benefit as well.

And that's all we really have to say. I have a lot of stats in my testimony for you.

REP. ZALASKI: Great. Are there any questions by the Committee?

Well, we appreciate you coming in today.

slj/gbr LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
COMMITTEE

2:00 P.M.

We've heard from -- you know, we went down this road last year and we're hoping we get this done this year.

NATASHA PIERRE: The paras, just as a little history, I started 12 years ago for PC S W and they came to us then. And we said, okay, but you have to get a strong group behind you. It just was a few saying it. And they put in that 10 years' work to do this and they're still fighting for the same benefit, okay. Thank you.

REP. ZALASKI: So, in other words, you're telling us it takes a long time to get things done here?

NATASHA PIERRE: It takes a long time get -- help these people with job security, especially in these economic times.

Thank you.

REP. ZALASKI: Thank you again.

NATASHA PIERRE: Bye-bye.

REP. ZALASKI: Okay. Next is Cathy Osten. I know who you are.

CATHY OSTEN: (Inaudible).

REP. ZALASKI: Thank you, Cathy.

Are there any questions from the Committee on this bill?

I have a quick question, and that is, the hearing testimony from last year and talking to many people about this bill, the point that people seem to not understand is that they always keep talking about a replacement cost,

slj/gbr LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
COMMITTEE

2:00 P.M.

because we have to replace this person if he's out sick. Maybe you can address that, being a First Selectman.

CATHY OSTEN: (Inaudible). There would be a replacement cost, but there is no initial cost because they're not paying the paraprofessional sick time. A lot of these people have no paid time and no (inaudible) time off. I said that clearly last time -- last year. I'll say it again this year. (inaudible).

REP. ZALASKI: Well, I'm glad you brought that point out because it seems that many times it's a sticking point for people. And I wanted to make sure that you or somebody had made that point clear.

Thank you, Cathy. Unless, Senator Prague, do you have any questions?

A VOICE: (inaudible).

REP. ZALASKI: Thank you, Cathy. We're set.

CATHY OSTEN: Thank you very much. Have a nice day, everyone.

REP. ZALASKI: Thank you. You, too.

Next on the list was Senator Kane. I don't see him in the room.

A VOICE: I think he's taking a nap.

REP. ZALASKI: He's taking a nap? Well, we are all overworked. So, we will move on to the public sector until he comes in.

Jane Blakeman, you're up first, and then Sue Garten is next.

JANE BLAKEMAN: (Inaudible). We are the well-rounded educators working in both special education and the mainstream within the scope of the curriculum. On a personal note, I spend my day starting out in the metal shop, going on to Freshman English, into a Global Issues class, and on to an AP Government class. And that's just the morning.

SB150

The problems with paraprofessionals not being covered by family and medical leave is a multi-layer one. It's for both the para, the student, the student they work with, the families who depend on them. And I don't think anyone would argue that academic consistency is a key to a student's success. So, when you have a para that may be one on one but needs to take time off to take care of her family or herself, she can't do so in the normal scope of taking weeks off at a time. She has to do it sporadically, and this is to ensure that she keeps her job.

This is a no-win situation for anyone. Whoever she is assigned to, the child becomes inconsistent in their learning. And if she was allowed to take time off under family and medical leave, a plan would be put in place. This would help the teacher she works with, the student, and it would make a smooth transition for everyone until her designated return date.

In another case, the para is having a baby and works right up to the due date because she needs to do this so she can save the time off that she has after the baby comes. She ends up having a cesarean section, at least six weeks' time off. And then there is also a medical problem with the baby. The stress is laid on. She can't leave her job, but yet she

COMMITTEE

has to take care of her family. If she was covered under family and medical leave, she could do so and it would be a much better situation for the student she takes care of at school and her new family. Granted, if she loses her job, her medical benefits are gone. COBRA, yes, but with no job, there's no way she could pay it.

Also, in another area, our state is in need of foster and adoptive families.

Paraprofessionals and their families are the sort of families that tend to fill that need. Paraprofessionals tend to be not only educators, but also nurturers.

My family and I became licensed a few years ago and took in three siblings. I was very lucky to be allowed to take ten weeks off. I thought, oh, I need a couple of weeks to get these children adjusted into our home. I needed ten. I was very fortunate that my job was held. Several other paraprofessionals wanted to come into that field and do the same thing. They were very encouraged by what my family and I were doing. But once they realized they would not be covered and they'd lose their job, they stepped back.

By reducing the hours from 1250 to 950, I know in my own District 99 percent of our paras would be covered. At this point less than 5 percent would be covered, only making four hours over the 1250 minimum.

Thank you for your time.

SENATOR PRAGUE: Thank you. Thank you for coming in, Jane, to testify.

JANE BLAKEMAN: Thank you.

slj/gbr LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES 2:00 P.M.
COMMITTEE

SENATOR PRAGUE: We almost had this bill last year,
almost.

JANE BLAKEMAN: I'm keeping my fingers crossed.

SENATOR PRAGUE: Keep your fingers crossed.

JANE BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much.

REP. ZALASKI: There's a question. Why don't you
step back.

SENATOR PRAGUE: I think you need to make it clear
that the paras are not asking for paid family
and medical leave. They're just asking for
family and medical leave that other people are
entitled to. The only benefit is you can take
the time off, but your job is there for you
when you come back.

JANE BLAKEMAN: That's how we feel, is that it
would be less stressful for -- you know, our
first concern is the students, not necessarily
us. We sometimes tend to put the students
before our own families. And knowing that
they're taken care of, we're taken care of, it
would definitely be, you know, a benefit to
everyone.

SENATOR PRAGUE: And the most needy students in our
schools are the ones who need you as paras.

JANE BLAKEMAN: Absolutely.

SENATOR PRAGUE: So, thank you for what you do and
thank you for coming in to testify.

JANE BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much.

REP. ZALASKI: Representative?

REP. ESPOSITO: Me, me first? Thank you.

Thank you.

SENATOR PRAGUE: They're fighting over you, Jane.

REP. ESPOSITO: Jane, what's the normal work schedule for a para, how many hours per week?

JANE BLAKEMAN: In the district I'm in, most of our paras -- we have about 79 -- 77 to 79, and the average hours would be between 25 and 30. I myself work 32-1/2. And working at 32-1/2 with 193 paid days, I would work a total of 1254 hours, 54-1/2. So, I'd only make this by 4-1/2 hours. So, the average aren't even covered, but most are about 25 to 30 hours a week.

REP. ESPOSITO: And most of them do work for the entire school year?

JANE BLAKEMAN: Yes.

REP. ESPOSITO: They're not employed for two or three days a week? They're employed for the full --

JANE BLAKEMAN: No, it's a five-day workweek. If they do 25 hours, it's a five-hour day. They're usually in the school building six hours or more. I don't know anyone personally that comes in and clocks in right at the time they're supposed to be there and leaves right at the time. Sometimes you shift your lunches. Basically, we go by the needs of the children first. We don't go by -- we don't punch a clock. We go by our set schedule. And then a lot of them work summer school as well. So, they're working beyond the school year and doing summer school program.

REP. ESPOSITO: The reason for my question is I,

slj/gbr' LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
COMMITTEE

2:00 P.M.

you know, because we lowered the hours to 950, and I could see now while you're working 32 hours and you barely met the 1250 rule, so, by lowering it --

JANE BLAKEMAN: Right.

REP. ESPOSITO: So, if any of these paras take time off, they would still be able to fall within their 950-hour rule?

JANE BLAKEMAN: Correct. That's -- I would say going over the numbers, just in my district alone, about 99 percent of us would be covered. And, again, we don't have -- we are granted 12 sick days a year. So, most of us aren't going to have a banked amount of sick days so that if we took, you know, family medical leave, it's really no cost to the district. We're very short on subs, so, therefore they're not even bringing subs in. Generally we cover each other. If we have one child, we'll take on somebody else's to try and alleviate problems for the child and for the para that's out.

REP. ESPOSITO: And just one more follow-up. I'm trying to look further out. But in the case of a para that does have a major illness and is out themselves for an extended period of time, this would disqualify them from the following year to get any family and medical leave.

JANE BLAKEMAN: Correct. I have a personal note. Six years now, I'm a breast cancer survivor. I took -- I had, I think, seven or eight sick days to use. I took that for my surgery, came back to work, and I'm -- you know, I'm just a tough old bird, so, I did work every day.

I didn't have a choice. I couldn't look ahead

COMMITTEE

and say, well, I can take the time off to be out. I needed the job. I needed the insurance. It wasn't an option. So, on the plus side, I probably survived because of that, but on the downside I didn't have the time I could have taken to rest and really recuperate.

REP. ESPOSITO: Thank you.

JANE BLAKEMAN: Thank you.

REP. ZALASKI: Representative Miner.

REP. MINER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you for coming up and staying. This is an issue that last year I spent a fair amount of time trying to, I guess, get my arms around just because it is a change from the federal law.

JANE BLAKEMAN: Right.

REP. MINER: And I think the nuance here, as I recall it, is that this group of individuals, because of the school year and because of the work load, generally doesn't meet that threshold. I think you indicated that in some cases you yourself would accumulate four hours more than that 1250.

JANE BLAKEMAN: Correct.

REP. MINER: Within -- are you familiar with other school districts to know whether or not at the 950 level they, too, achieve about a 95 percent rate or not?

JANE BLAKEMAN: I don't know the number. Someone else that may testify today may have those numbers more accurately. But I do know

slj/gbr LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
COMMITTEE

2:00 P.M.

several paras in other districts, and most of us don't work any more than 32 or 33 -- I work 32-1/2, and that's pretty much the max that you would work in a school day. And at 25 hours being kind of a norm across the districts, I would say the 25 hours, that would give them the 950 that they needed.

REP. MINER: Okay, thank you.

JANE BLAKEMAN: Thank you.

REP. MINER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

JANE BLAKEMAN: Any more questions? Thank you.

REP. ZALASKI: Next, Senator Kane, please.

SENATOR KANE: Good afternoon.

Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, Senator Guglielmo, Representative Rigby, Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, I'm not here for Senate Bill 150. I am actually here to testify in support of House Bill 5238, AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL ARBITRATIONS AND A MUNICIPALITY'S RESERVE FUND BALANCE.

As a State Senator for ten towns, I am familiar with the challenges that face small towns and municipalities when constructing their yearly budgets. Crucial to ensuring fiscal stability in both the short term and the long term, towns usually strive to maintain a healthy reserve fund balance.

The purpose of this bill is to ensure that a municipality cannot be penalized in binding arbitration proceedings for possessing an appropriate reserve fund balance unless it exceeds 10 percent of the municipality's total

REP. ZALASKI: Pat Hayes, and after that Sandy Reagan.

PAT HAYES: Good afternoon. My name is Pat Hayes. I'm here speaking as a long-standing member of the Waterbury Board of Education regarding Raised Bill 150, regarding the FMLA for paraprofessionals. I spoke last year, and maybe one of the things that needs to be said is that there might be still a myth out there that these people that are working for us are simply passing out paper, holding kids' hands or things like that. It's not like that at all. They have a really difficult job. It's an important job. It's vital to the functioning of our school systems now.

One of the things that has put this upon us is that the cost of out-of-tuition district -- out-of-district tuition is prohibitive. We've a meeting this evening. We're going to be voting on just for 110 kids, \$2-1/2 million out-of-district tuition. So, obviously that's putting districts in a position where they want to bring those kids back. So, we have kids coming back now that would have never been in the school systems in individual classrooms because of inclusion.

So, it's a very difficult job. It's a demanding job. They're not there for discretionary income any more. They count on this money. This is an instance where they would never even think about missing work unless it was a necessary situation regarding their family. And I'm sure they would get back sooner and it would be beneficial to their family if, in fact, they had the opportunity to take time off to be with their family and not have concern about losing their job.

I think I've heard before what the other concerns are. I don't think there's any question that it doesn't cost us any additional dollars. And, in fact, if nothing else it's a way of us giving back a little bit to these people who are working for us now in a really demanding job and, quite frankly, underpaid.

SENATOR PRAGUE: Mr. Hayes, I'm very happy you came in to testify. What a great Board of Education member you are. Thank you.

PAT HAYES: Okay, thank you.

REP. ZALASKI: Sandy? Please.

SANDY REIGEL: good afternoon, members of this Committee. My name is Sandy Reigal. I have been a paraprofessional in Hartford Public Schools for 33 years and I'm here to testify for the FMLA bill.

SB150

As I said, I've been here for 33 years until I had to take a medical retirement on December 9th. February 1st would have been my 34th anniversary of doing a job I loved with all my heart and soul. I was gravely ill in April of last year. I spent seven weeks at Hartford Hospital, the first 4-1/2 weeks of which I have no recollection of. The doctors told my family I might not make it. My daughter had to confer with doctors as to my treatment and making decisions for me because I couldn't do so. She actually camped out at the hospital for a couple of weeks, then I had 5-1/2 weeks at rehab.

Fortunately for 33 years I had accumulated a good bank of sick time to get me through my situation. Many paras now are much shorter

time in the system and don't have sick time built up. It could be any of their close family members or the paras themselves involved in this type of dilemma. Yes, they receive no pay for this time, but at least their jobs would not be in jeopardy. Since paras are ten-month positions, I feel strongly that the required hours should and must be reduced to protect them.

I urge you to pass the FMLA bill today. I am very sad not to be working with my students and I need to see this bill passed before any more are in my situation.

Thank you for your support.

REP. ZALASKI: Thank you.

Are there any -- no questions from the --

SANDY REIGEL: Thank you.

REP. ZALASKI: Thank you for coming in today.

Next is Cathy Heinze, Catherine Heinze. Sorry. Shouldn't call you --

CATHERINE HEINZE: (Inaudible).

REP. ZALASKI: Heinze, Heinze. Henz, Heinze, ketchup, you know. 8:36:47 ***.

CATHERINE HEINZE: Testing -- oh, much better. Testing, okay.

Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Catherine Heinze and I'm a paraprofessional in the New Britain School District. I urge you to support S.B. 150 which reduces the current requirement of 1,250 hours to 950 hours in order to allow paraprofessionals to be

eligible for FMLA leave.

Today's paraprofessionals play an important role in helping to bridge the achievement gap that many of our students are faced with today. They are with these children for five days a week from September to June. And then there is summer break. Unfortunately there are very few para positions available in the summer programs. This would be the only way that a para could meet the 1,250-hour requirement. Even if a paraprofessional had perfect attendance for the whole school year, it would still not be possible for them to attain the required hours. These dedicated people who help students in need are being denied the right to FMLA.

When my mother was struggling with cancer, I was able to care for her because of the protection of FMLA. Now, without FMLA, a para has to decide between their family's needs or the risk of losing their job. In a profession where paraprofessionals educate and care for other people's children, it seems unfair that they risk losing so much if a serious health condition arose and they had to care for their own family. Please support S.B. 150.

Questions?

REP. ZALASKI: Any questions from the Committee?

CATHERINE HEINZE: Thank you.

REP. ZALASKI: Thank you for coming.

CATHERINE HEINZE: You're welcome. Sorry I pronounced your name, I apologize.

Gwen Douglas. Good afternoon, Gwen.

COMMITTEE

GWEN DOUGLAS: Good afternoon. I would just like to express the importance of passing this bill. Five years ago, before my husband's death, he was pronounced or diagnosed with kidney failure and liver disease. Amongst that were many other complications that I could not -- don't even have the time to discuss on hand. But during the rain of that time, it was very hard for me to stay on hand with my job, thanking God for the support of administrative staff, in union, and those who stood by me.

Again, my name is Mrs. Gwenath Douglas. I am a Para-Educator for Special Education in Hartford and a building union representative. I sit on several committees within the Hartford Federation, a paraprofessionals and AFT and PSRP and you name it, I claim it. I would like to speak briefly today about the S.B. 150, an act concerning family and medical Leave benefits for certain municipal employees.

The Family and Medical Leave Act, which is called FMLA, provides select employees with up to 12 weeks of unpaid, employment protected leave per year. Let me just jump to the chase of why I am here today. I was unable to be with my husband Paul. It hurt my heart every day. It pulled hard on me not knowing if he would -- if it would be my last time that I would see him again. There were times when I had to pick and choose what day I would go in to work, fearing that I would lose the job. If I had this benefit in place, I would feel more comfortable to give him the adequate attention that I wanted to give him.

I had to go home at times after putting our students on the bus to face watching my loving husband deteriorate and waste away before my

COMMITTEE

eyes, and then finally die. And there's nothing that I was able to do about it, but I gave my best. He was God's gift to me and I'm glad that I stayed.

Let me just speak from my heart. When I speak on this, I speak for my brother, I speak for my sister. I speak for those who wouldn't even have a voice. This is the right time to pass it. Adding to my journey now, I sit here about 15 years in employment, but now I have my knee baby who is going through the same journey. I just got word that my 29-year-old son, college kid, type 1 diabetes, has now been diagnosed with chronic kidney disease.

So, now I'm praying that you all will hear, not just see our faces. I wear this smile because that smile says that I love going to my job every day, caring for a multi-handicap room children that probably won't even know where they're going, just grateful to be alive, to see the smiles on their faces.

If you pass this bill, it will help Gwenath to help her son who will now have to find extra resource, extra money to help him through this time and his time of grief and pain. I sit here today, and I thank you for hearing me. That's my baby.

REP. ZALASKI: Thank you so much for coming in.
Senator Prague has --

GWEN DOUGLAS: If you have any questions, I would be glad to answer you.

SENATOR PRAGUE: Thank you.

Mrs. Douglas --

GWEN DOUGLAS: Yes.

SENATOR PRAGUE: -- it took a lot of courage and strength for you under the circumstances to come in and testify on this bill. We thank you very much and wish you good luck.

GWEN DOUGLAS: Thank you so much.

REP. ZALASKI: Thank you. Next is Lori Pelletier. Good luck following that.

LORI PELLETIER: And I was thrilled when I got number 9.

Good afternoon. For the record, I'm Lori Pelletier, and I serve as the secretary treasurer of the Connecticut AFL-CIO. And I have submitted written testimony and was going to address the para FMLA bill, but I don't need to. Those comments were what it's all about. I will address in particular House Bill 5233, An Act Concerning Workers' Compensation for Fire Fighters.

Many of you know that my brother is a fire fighter. And I know that going and seeing him in his firehouse that it's as much a family as when he would come home to us at our house. And, so, the idea that these men and women who are there to protect us, to respond to situations, heaven forbid one of their brethren die on the job that we can't extend an arm of compassion and workers' compensation to provide them with some additional services is beyond me. Our fire service day in and day out are the people that are running into the burning buildings that all of us are running out of. And, so, I urge your support of this bill.

I urge you to push back on people that will say, "The sky is falling." And what next?

slj/gbr LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
COMMITTEE

2:00 P.M.

Again, these are men and women who are the nature of their person do things that most people will not, have courage beyond belief, and that we're all on time -- from time to time willing to stand next to them and have our photos taken with them because they are the personification of those that are important in our society.

So, again, I appreciate all the Committee's work with all the bills that they raise each and every year. And if you have any questions, I'd be delighted to answer them.

REP. ZALASKI: Thank you. Are there any questions from the Committee?

LORI PELLETIER: Thank you.

REP. ZALASKI: Thanks so much, Lori.

Jim Finley. I don't see him in the room, though.

Ryan Anderson.

BRIAN ANDERSON: Good afternoon, Chairman Zalaski, Chairman Prague, members of the Labor Committee. I'm Brian Anderson. I'm a lobbyist for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 35,000 public and private employees.

HB 5233
HB 5201
HB 5238
HB 5203

Council, I'm here to speak on several bills quickly. Council 4 supports Senate Bill No. 150. The eloquent testimony of Mrs. Douglas leaves me feeling inadequate to address this. Needless to say, people don't want to take FMLA. It's unpaid largely. They take it because they have to. There was an anomaly that cut out these workers. They're among the very few workers who don't get this protection. It's badly needed.

I know -- and I thank many of you for working hard over the years to pass this. Let's make this year we pass it. I can't see -- I've not heard any good reason articulated to not pass this bill.

Senate Bill 5233, an act concerning workers' comp for firefighters, is one that we strongly support. We don't represent firefighters. We do represent the folks who do the dispatch and we've worked closely with them. They have a really tough job. And to extend this to firefighters who have witnessed the death of a fellow fire fighter I think is simply humane. Thank God this doesn't happen so often, but a fire fighter's job is extraordinarily risky. So, I think it makes sense. I think the public would strongly support this.

We oppose House Bill 5201, An Act Concerning Deadlines for the Completion of Municipal Binding Arbitration. The binding arbitration system has worked well. It's probably the single-most studied system in Government. I'll summarize. It's been studied closely by program review. If you actually work in society, you can see that by setting up deadlines that are strict, you lose the flexibility in the system and you would force more binding arbitration -- a binding arbitration decision can take up to two years to be arrived at and it can be far more costly than coming to an agreement.

So, don't broke -- don't fix what's not broke is what our suggestion is. We oppose 520, An Act Concerning Municipal Collective Bargaining Arbitration and the Appointment of Arbitrators to the Arbitration Panel. Similar to the last bill, this system works. It's a system where we currently have a situation where the town

HB 5203

police officers, soldiers?

JIM FINLEY: No, sir, this would be a first.

REP. RIGBY: This would be a first, okay. Thank you for answering the question.

SENATOR PRAGUE: John Moran, I think police officers do, but I'm going to check it out.

REP. ZALASKI: Thank you. Appreciate you coming.

Okay. I think I called that Dawn and she wasn't here; is that right?

Cheryl Davis, maybe.

SHELLYE DAVIS: Shellye.

REP. ZALASKI: Shellye, I'm sorry. I couldn't --

SHELLYE DAVIS: Good afternoon, Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and distinguished members of the Committee, my name is Shellye Davis and I am Co-President of the Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals. As a collective bargaining unit, we represent paraprofessionals who serve a diverse student population in the City of Hartford's school system. We are also 10-month employees who are not eligible for unemployment.

I would like to speak briefly today in favor of S.B. 150, An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits.

The Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals strongly supports this bill and the need for our members to be covered by it. As professional public educational employees, it is imperative that we maintain a positive and focused environment for the children and

COMMITTEE

families we serve, including our own. Our lives are parallel to our community. We are susceptible to the same issues confronted daily by all those striving to make peaceful and responsible life for their loved ones and themselves. The anxiety and stress of welcoming a newborn into our family, caring for an ailing spouse, child or parent, or recovery from an injury or serious health issue should not have to be compounded by the fear of losing our employment or our health benefits.

The members of the Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals are some of the most caring, creative, and resourceful people in the country. The commitment and dedication of these men and women who serve the Hartford school system is unparalleled. They richly deserve to have the peace of mind, knowing their service to the community is important. The triumphs and tragedies that inevitably affect all life should not be compounded by the taking of one's livelihood. People need to be able to take care of themselves and their families. In the grander scheme of things, we all benefit.

So, I urge you to please help Gwenath and Sandy and Terry and Christina and all the paraprofessionals that have gone through the situation where this bill would have helped them and in turn helped the community and the children we serve.

If there are any questions, I'll be happy to answer.

REP. ZALASKI: Thank you. Are there any questions from the Committee?

Hearing none, thank you very much.

SHELLYE DAVIS: Thank you. I'm sure you're going to help us pass this bill.

REP. ZALASKI: We really appreciate you coming in. That's what we're here for.

SHELLYE DAVIS: Thank you.

REP. ZALASKI: I almost got it last year.

Okay. Next is Paul Rapanault.

PAUL RAPANAULT: Good afternoon, Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, Senator Guglielmo, Representative Rigby. My name is Paul Rapanault. I represent the Uniform Professional Firefighters. We represent 5,000 unified firefighters throughout the state of Connecticut. I'm here to talk to you about several different bills.

HB5201 HB5202
HB5203

The first bill I want to talk to you about is one that we support, is 5233, An Act Concerning Workers' Compensation for Fire Fighters. The need for this bill arises out of an employer-provided Employee Assistance Programs that do not meet the needs of individuals who have been exposed to the death of coworkers. Most EAP programs are excellent, but are very limited in duration and often they fall short of the needs of the employee.

An employer who witnesses the tragic death of a coworker from afar is a completely different experience from one who is standing side by side on a hose line or on a ladder or on a roof. It's a completely different experience not only physically, but mentally. Firefighters are a very unique breed, I want to say. We work as a unit. When we go into,

KIA MURRELL: Thank you so much for pointing that out. If it's okay with the Committee, I'd be happy to revise that and turn back in the correct testimony. I apologize for that.

REP. ZALASKI: Thank you, Kia.

KIA MURRELL: Okay.

REP. ZALASKI: We don't want you killing the trees. Can you do it by E-mail? That would be great.

KIA MURRELL: Well, as you can see, we do back to back. So, (inaudible). But I would like to correct that because this is an official record and it's rare that I would have made a typo of that (inaudible).

REP. ZALASKI: Okay. Again, thank you.

KIA MURRELL: Thank you.

REP. ZALASKI: Next is Gayle Furman. Come on up. Don't be afraid. You were late, but we wanted to hear you so bad we waited. Be comfortable. We let her talk. You can do it, too.

GAYLE FURMAN: There we go. Okay. My name is Gayle Furman. By the way, thank you for hearing me. I'm a paraprofessional at Jack Jackter and I'm speaking to the bill S.B. 150 concerning the family medical leave act. And I work, as I said, a paraprofessional. I'm also Vice President of our Local Union for the paraprofessionals, and I just wanted to talk as an advocate for the paras about the hours on FMLA that you need to work.

It says you need to work the 1250 hours and we're asking for less than that because most paraprofessionals do work much less than that.

slj/gbr LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
COMMITTEE

2:00 P.M.

We are paraprofessionals because our main thing is we want to help these disadvantaged children to succeed in their school environment. We don't do it for the money obviously, although money helps in our families, of course, but it's not the highest-paying job. So, we do do it for the children.

So, we are also usually the main care givers of our families. And many of the paraprofessionals carry their medical insurance. So, if we are on medical -- if we were not able to have the FMLA and had to stop to -- had to lose our job, so to speak, because of a medical emergency in our family, a lot of us would lose our medical insurance and it would be devastating.

An example: My mother-in-law was in hospice. It would have been easier for me to take care of my mother-in-law being a female and everything, but I didn't have the opportunity. So, my husband luckily had FMLA and he was able to do that for her. So, basically, I just implore you to consider lowering the hours for FMLA so we are eligible.

Thank you.

REP. ZALASKI: Thank you, Gayle. Any questions from the Committee?

We really appreciate you coming in today.

GAYLE FURMAN: Thank you.

REP. ZALASKI: Now it's Dawn's turn.

DAWN REPOLI: Good afternoon. Thank you for your time.

COMMITTEE

REP. ESPOSITO: Dawn, we were looking for you all afternoon.

DAWN REPOLI: I couldn't get out of work. I'm a dedicated worker.

REP. ESPOSITO: (Inaudible).

DAWN REPOLI: I heard I was called earlier.

I am here, as Gayle is, for the S.B. 150, the act for -- concerning federal leave for municipal employees. I am a paraprofessional as well. I work with Special Ed students. My testimony is a little bit more personal. I have had two situations that actually I was petrified that I was going to lose my job.

One situation was my mother had a valve replacement. She actually died on the table three times and thankfully came out of it and was ICU in a coma. My brother, my father and my sister and I spent seven days in the waiting room. My boss was wonderful. I used my personal days. I used my sick days. But they didn't think she was going to come out of it and I was going to be the one to have to take care of her. And I was, on top of being so afraid obviously of what was going to happen with my mom, I thought I was going to lose my job. And I do carry the insurance for my family. My husband owns a small business in East Hartford. And if I lose my job, we have no insurance.

The second situation that happened is my youngest son has super ventricular tachycardia which is a heart condition. He was at Boston Children's Hospital for many days, just appointments back and forth travel, and again, this impacted me. I didn't know what was going to happen with him and his health and I

would have been his care giver. And they are not required to hold my job for me. No matter, you know, what kind of worker you are, what you do and bring to work every day, what you do for the children. I mean, as Gayle said, we do this job for the children. It's definitely -- we're not raking in the big bucks. We do it for the children and we really care about our jobs. And to think that these kind of situations can come up and they don't have to hold our job for us is really scary.

We are asking you to lower the number of hours. It's not a lot. It's down to 950. And I implore you to do that for us. It would be wonderful.

REP. ZALASKI: Thank you. And that is our intent to do that for you.

Is there any questions on the Committee?

Seeing none, thank you again for coming in.

DAWN REPOLI: Thank you. Thank you for your time.

REP. ZALASKI: Appreciate it. Thank you.

Is there anybody else that wants to get up and testify? Stacy, Jennifer?

All right. Well, I guess the public hearing is ended. Thank you all for staying.

LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE HEARING 3/1/2012

S.B. NO. 150 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES.

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski and the members of the committee:

My name is Christine Smith, I'm a resident of Manchester and I am here today to speak about S.B. No. 150- An act concerning family and medical leave benefits for certain municipal employees.

I am in favor of this bill. I've been a proud Hartford Paraprofessional for over 15 years and being a part of a team of educators. On Saturday, February 11, 2012, I was supposed to testify on behalf of paraprofessionals and our importance in education and educating our children. Due to a family situation I was unable to attend. While my main concern and focus was toward my son, I couldn't help but feel relieved that this happened on a weekend and he didn't have an extended stay. Even though, as of right now I have a sufficient amount of sick time to utilize if needed, but what if I didn't? I would be walking in the same shoes that other paras have walked in before me. I believe most of us try balancing our professional lives with our personal lives and this bill will give us the opportunity to have more employment stability. When faced with unexpected events and medical emergencies the last thing that anyone needs to worry about is if their job will still be there when they return.

I work diligently as well as several paraprofessionals. The passing of this bill would make it a lot easier for those who may need the time to look after a loved one and may not have accumulated sick time available for one reason or another. It will allow us to be one step closer to receiving more recognition that we are part of "The Team"

We as paraprofessionals deserve this benefit. Please support S.B. 150.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Smith

(Paraprofessional)



Patrice Peterson
President

Paige Farnham
Secretary/Treasurer

Robert D Rinker
Executive Director

March 1, 2012

General Assembly
Labor and Public Employees Committee
Room 3800, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: S.B. 150 – An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees

Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

My name is Anne Feeney, and I am a special education paraprofessional at Roanng Brook School in Avon Public Schools, where I have worked for the past 18 years.

I am submitting testimony in support of S.B. 150, “An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees.”

I am fortunate to work in a district where the school board and administration follow the spirit of Connecticut’s Family and Medical Leave Act. “Paras” in Avon are allowed to take unpaid family and medical leave when necessary and return to our jobs.

Unfortunately, this is the exception and not the rule for paras working in most school districts across Connecticut.

The bottom line is that paras simply want to be treated the same as other school employees when it comes to family and medical leave. **All of us should all be allowed to take time off of work after the birth of a child or when they or a family member is seriously ill without the fear of losing our jobs.**

It’s a simple matter of fairness and equal treatment.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Anne Feeney
Special Education Paraprofessional, Avon Public Schools



Patrice Peterson
President
Paige Farnham
Secretary/Treasurer
Robert D. Rinker
Executive Director

March 1, 2012

General Assembly
Labor and Public Employees Committee
Room 3800, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: S.B. 150 – An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees

Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

My name is Susan Nelson and I am counsel with CSEA/SEIU, Local 2001, a union that represents 2,500 paraeducators in 34 local and regional public school districts as well as Regional Education Service Centers across Connecticut. For the past several years, I have been negotiating multiple school paraprofessional contracts with local boards of education.

As we all know, the economy is requiring sacrifices from all of us. Paraprofessionals are profoundly impacted by this because of historically low hourly wages in what was once considered a “mom’s job,” together with the limited work opportunities presented by the school calendar of 180 workdays. Paras are being forced to pay enormous percentages of their income for health insurance, on top of accepting zero percent wage increases in many communities.

During negotiations a couple of years ago, I learned that one of our negotiating committee members had been denied family leave because she is not covered by the law. It turns out that most school paraprofessionals are excluded from FMLA coverage because they are just shy of the 1,250 minimum annual hours required to be worked. This means that full time school employees can be denied the right to return to their jobs after taking leave to care for family or to undergo medical treatment. This is simply wrong, and cannot have been intended or understood at the time the law was first adopted.

Accordingly, we have proposed several times to add contract language that would extend this right to paraprofessionals in our bargaining unit without success. Legislative action is the only way to right this situation.

There is virtually no economic impact to school districts as a result of considering paras eligible for FMLA. In fact, the maximum exposure financially would be three months of the employer contribution to health insurance for the employee on leave. Quite frankly, the inconvenience of scheduling substitutes or juggling assignments does not justify the hardship placed on paraprofessionals by this inequity. Moreover, school administrators are already accommodating the rest of their regular employees who work at least 1,250 hours annually with FMLA, and are presumably set up to deal with it.

There is no reason not pass S.B. 150 and we strongly encourage you to do so.

Susan Nelson
Counsel, CSEA/SEIU, Local 2001



Patrice Peterson
President

Paige Farnham
Secretary/Treasurer

Robert D Rinker
Executive Director

March 1, 2012

General Assembly
Labor and Public Employees Committee
Room 3800, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: S.B. 150 – An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees

Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

My name is Timothy Riddle, and I've been a paraprofessional in the Brookfield school district for the past ten years. Despite being considered a full time employee by the Brookfield school district, I do not have the same rights as other school employees, as paraprofessionals are not currently eligible to receive family medical leave.

As I get older, concerns about my health and medical needs are increasing. That's part of life and something many of us confront as we age. But it troubles me that if I, or someone in my family were to become ill, and I had to take more time off than my sick time allowed, my job would not be protected and I could easily lose my livelihood, just because I fell through a loophole in the FMLA law. That's not right.

Paraprofessionals are full time employees and we need to be treated the same as other school employees, which is why I am submitting testimony voicing my support for Senate Bill 150, An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Timothy Riddle
Special Education Paraprofessional, Brookfield Schools



Patrice Peterson
President

Paige Farnham
Secretary/Treasurer

Robert D Rinker
Executive Director

March 1, 2012

General Assembly
Labor and Public Employees Committee
Room 3800, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: S.B. 150 – An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees

Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee

My name is Janette Smith, and I am a paraprofessional at Mansfield Middle School in Mansfield Public Schools.

I am submitting this testimony in support of S.B. 150, legislation that would correct a long-standing disparity that unfairly impacts public school paraeducators in Connecticut.

Parents and elected officials are now beginning to understand that as paraprofessionals, we have some of the most demanding jobs in a school, but many members of the public either do not know who we are or what we do. We frequently work one-on-one with special needs students, particularly the ever-growing number with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

However, there are many important benefits and considerations that are not afforded to our paraprofessionals, but are to teachers, school administrators, and other public employees.

The reality is that in Connecticut, paraprofessionals do not legally have access to the rights granted under the Family and Medical Leave Act. We do not work the minimum 1,250 total hours per year required by federal law, yet many of us are considered full-time employees.

Amending the law so that all school employees have access to Family and Medical Leave Act protections is commonsense and fundamentally fair. **The 2,500 public school paraprofessionals in my Union and I respectfully urge you to support S.B. 150 to correct the inequity we face today.**

Thank you for your quick attention to this critical matter.

Janette Smith

Instructional Assistant, Mansfield Middle School
Vice-President, Paraprofessional Council, CSEA/SEIU, Local 2001



Patrice Peterson
President

Paige Farnham
Secretary/Treasurer

Robert D. Rinker
Executive Director

March 1, 2012

General Assembly
Labor and Public Employees Committee
Room 3800, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: S.B. 150 – An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees

Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

My name is Bill Walkauskas and I am a teacher assistant and bus driver at Whitney High School East in Hamden, which is part of the ACES regional educational service centers system. I am also the president of the Paraprofessional Council in CSEA/SEIU, Local 2001, which has united more than 2,500 paraeducators from 34 different public school districts and RESCs throughout Connecticut.

The role of the “para” has changed greatly since I started my job nearly two decades ago. The reality is that paras play a critical role in the lives of the students we serve, providing academic and social education as well as assisting in traditional classroom instruction.

However, there are many important considerations that are not afforded to paras, but are to teachers, school administrators, and other public employees. These disparities threaten to drive away dedicated, skilled paras who find it increasingly difficult to afford to live and raise their own children and keep the job they love.

One inequity in particular that we believe the legislature must act to resolve pertains to family and medical leave protections. The reality is that in Connecticut, most paras do not legally have access to the rights granted under the Family and Medical Leave Act.

My employer does provide unpaid family and medical leave to those of us working eight-hour workdays. Thankfully, many of us who have dedicated our lives to working with students facing significant challenges have the protection of returning to our jobs after an extended hospital stay or taking time to care for a family member facing illness.

But this right is not fairly distributed to all public school employees. **That is why I urge lawmakers to support S.B. 150 so that paraeducators have access to these protections.** Not only is it fundamentally fair, it won't increase costs for financially strained local school districts and RESCs.

Thank you for your quick attention to this critical matter.

Bill Walkauskas

Teacher Assistant/Bus Driver, Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES)
President, Paraprofessional Council, CSEA/SEIU, Local 2001

Testimony of Leslie Sousa, East Hartford Paraprofessional

Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 1, 2012

S.B. 150 AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES

I hope to express the importance of lowering the amount of hours needed to qualify for F.M.L.A. As a para I can only work for a school year. This is 182 days. In that time I may not reach the required 1250 hours needed to obtain F.M.L.A. benefits. I cannot receive unemployment benefits during the time off and I work another job for the summer to supplement my income. This has affected me and I would like to tell you my story.

During my Christmas break two years ago, I fell and severely broke my ankle. I had surgery and was very limited in what I was allowed to do for over three months. I ran out of sick days from February 13- March 24, 2009. As soon as I ran out of sick time I was sent a bill from my administration that I would have to pay \$2,168.40, my required 75% portion of my medical benefits, for this approved unpaid sick leave. If I didn't pay by the fifteenth of March they would cancel my insurance. I was so overwhelmed by this bill that I took out a loan from a bank. I could not go without benefits. Eventually, my union was able to establish a sick bank for me. My co-workers were allowed, per our Board Of Education's approval, to donate their sick time to me. As long as I had sick days, whether mine or donated, the administration told me I did not have to pay 75% for my benefits. I was able to return the check to my bank.

When someone is faced with a difficult health issue they shouldn't have to be at the mercy of an administration's interpretation of a contract. If we had a law that supported all of us who do not reach the 1,250 hours required every year to obtain F.M.L.A., it would eliminate a lot of the uncertainty of whether you can afford your benefits or, in some cases, have a job to return to.

With respect,

Leslie Sousa, paraprofessional

East Hartford High School

Testimony of Janet Rivera, Paraprofessional
New Britain Schools

Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 1, 2012

S.B. 150 AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN
MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES

I write this letter on behalf of all Paraprofessionals especially those that have loved ones with medical issues and for the ones that have loved ones with medical issues.

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor Committee. My name is Janet Rivera; I am a Paraprofessional in the New Britain School District. I ask of you today to get this bill passed because we need the FMLA benefit. I feel I am a very dedicated Paraprofessional who give 110% every day for the students I work with that have learning disabilities that such as Autism, ADD,ADHD, developmental delay, emotional problems and etc. I go and give them my undivided attention some days I feel I am their mother, father, teacher, friend, and social worker. I give them the tools they need to learn and grow and I'm there every day even when I'm not feeling well.

On the other hand there are days when I'm not there and worry for them I worry how they will get through the day. Why am I not there? I have a daughter who has mild Autism, sensory integration, Ehlers Danlos Syndrome and suffers from anxiety. She may not be feeling well that day or I have to take her for an evaluation, or to see the cardiologist to make sure her arteries are healthy and growing normal. What do I do? Can I afford to miss work and worry about if my absences are going to count against me. My husband has FMLA, he is the only driver in the family and I need him to take us for her appt. I do not drive I get epileptic seizures that prevent me from it. I have to be there for her appointments I am her mother and she needs me. God forbid my husband is unable to be here for us then what. For the past month her anxiety is interfering with school and I'm told she needs to see a Professional. When? Early afternoons once a week. My daughter needs help do I look the other way. Do I not give it to her? I'll do anything for my students. Why not my own? I can lose my job or get a bad evaluation if I have too many absences. Then I can't help her physically, emotionally and financially. Why do I have to chose? I want a peace of mind and a support system that lets me take care of my child.

The FMLA bill will give me that peace of mind. Just to let you know I am not here personally to tell you because I am with my daughter at an appointment as this letter is being read with that Professional she needs. This is my story but there are many more with these worries and pleas that have more severe medical problems than me. I personally know two other Paraprofessionals at my school that have children with Diabetes and other ailing medical problems that keep them from going to work because like me they give their all to the students but they too have to take care of their own. Please take into consideration with serious thought and importance of how we need this bill passed.

Thank You

Testimony of Pat Rauchle, East Hartford Paraprofessional

Labor and Public Employees Committee

March 1, 2012

S.B. 150 AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee.

I am writing to you to urge you to help myself and fellow paraprofessionals qualify for F.M.L.A. As the law is now written, we do not qualify for F.M.L.A. guidelines because of the amount of work hours needed, 1250. I have had many "setbacks" in the past few years, starting in 2000. I have had to care for sick relatives, mourn the deaths of my sister, mother, son, and husband. All while I battled cancer (that came 33 radiation treatments) and suffered a heart attack. Most recently, I had eye surgery and, what I thought was, a virus. It turned out to be an irregular heartbeat. Thus, I had a pacemaker put in my heart this past January. I am recuperating and feeling anxious because I am going to run out of sick time again. My union has told me they will get donated sick time from my colleagues for me. Also, the union did negotiate language in our current contract that allows me 12 weeks after I have depleted my sick days, before the administration can charge me for my benefits. Still I feel the same anxiety that my job or benefits are in jeopardy and it won't subside until I have it in writing that the Board of Education has approved the "sick bank" my union is attempting to collect.

Before the new language was negotiated into our contract, I suffered my first heart attack, I was told I was running out of sick days and would have to pay 75% of my medical benefits. I was financially unable to do this without any income coming in, so I returned to work **against** my doctor's orders. Losing family members and becoming sick is hard enough without having to worry about paying additional for my medical benefits.

I hope you can alleviate this stress for all paras in Connecticut. Although hard working and invaluable to our schools, especially with our current education budget, paras are needed more and more. The bullying the administration is allowed to do with current F.M.L.A. law's language needs to be stopped. Please help us. Thank you for considering to help the paras out.

With much respect,

Pat Rauchle, paraprofessional
East Hartford Public Schools

Testimony of Sarah Dickman, New Britain Paraprofessional

Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 1, 2012

S.B. 150 AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE
BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Sarah Dickman and I am a paraprofessional at Pulaski Middle School in New Britain. FMLA is a great thing to have and I feel it is unfair that the paraprofessionals do not have it. FMLA would have helped me with a surgery I had last year and I was out two weeks. I could not use it, because of the silly two hours I do not have. I find that FMLA is so important to have, because it will help the paraprofessionals to not lose their jobs. I am recently pregnant and I can not even use FMLA when I am out for two months. Paraprofessionals work hard and do so much for the teachers and I really think we deserve the FMLA, incase of an emergency. I really hope, in all the research, that the FMLA for paraprofessionals with pass. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and participating on trying to pass the law for FMLA.

Testimony of Theresa Staranchak, President
New Britain Federation of Paraprofessionals, AFT Local 2407

Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 1, 2012

S.B. 150 AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE BENEFITS FOR
CERTAIN MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor Committee.

My name is Theresa Staranchak and I have chosen the career path of a paraprofessional. To me, making connections with students and helping them to be successful through academic and social interactions is something I really want to be doing. My 1:1 Spec. Ed. para position is a challenging, flexible and worthwhile position to be in. My role consists of assisting the teachers I work with, implementing my student's schedule and to also maintain a positive and focused environment for him. Ultimately, he will have less stress and a well balanced day.

I am also here today as President of my Local, 2407 from New Britain. We have a membership of over 250 paras who work hard, are dedicated, and most of all are resourceful individuals who are productive people in the district as well as the community. Our district relies on us and frankly we are the backbone of the educational system and an integral part of student's success.

This brings me to the reason why I feel strongly about bill SB 150. We cannot continue to live everyday with the stress and anxiety of whether or not we will have a job when we may be stricken with illness beyond our control. We as paraprofessionals are not eligible for FMLA under the present bill and this is not right. If we cannot take care of a family member or ourselves and feel confident that our jobs are not at stake, then how do we really stay healthy? Just this year alone 3 paras were denied FMLA because they do not meet the minimum hours which are 1250. These paras deserve more than this type of treatment. If the amount of hours were lowered then paras could take advantage of this benefit that every other employee has.

Peace of mind is a benefit that all paras could have if you will support this bill and consider passing it. I ask you here today to please give this very unique and committed group of individuals who presently are the only ones that are not benefiting by FMLA, the chance to benefit. Thank you for listening and for giving your time.

March 1, 2012

Dear Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski and members of the Labor Committee.

S.B. 150 AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE BENEFITS
FOR CERTAIN MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES.

My name is Gayle Furman and I am a Paraprofessional at Jack Jackter Intermediate School in Colchester, CT. and the Vice President of AFT-CT Local 3279. I am writing in support of the above legislation.

The current hours needed to work to be eligible for FMLA is 1,250 per year. Most of our Paraprofessionals at JJIS work just under that amount per year. Paraprofessionals choose this position for many reasons.

- The desire to help disadvantaged children succeed in their school environment
- Many are the main caregivers for their families including their children and their parents.
- Many paraprofessionals carry the families Medical Insurance.

If an extended medical emergency impacts one of us or our family, we would most likely be the one to care for them. It would be devastating to lose our jobs and not have the income or insurance to maintain our financial needs.

Thank you for your time. Please consider this important legislation for the children we service and the families we care for.

Gayle Furman

Gayle Furman
Jack Jackter Intermediate School
215 Halls Hill Road
Colchester, CT 06415
860-537-9421

COMMISSION OFFICERS

Antonia "Toni" Moran, *Chair*
 Melane O'Brien, *Vice Chair*
 Mary Lee A. Kiernan, *Secretary*
 Denise Rodosevich, *Treasurer*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Teresa C. Younger

Connecticut General Assembly



Permanent Commission on the Status of Women

The State's leading force for women's equality

COMMISSIONERS

Lucia A. Aschettino
 JoAnn Calnen
 Mayor April Capone
 Yvonne R. Davis
 Barbara DeBaptiste
 Adrienne Farrar Houel
 Kristin A. LaFleur
 Jean L. Rexford
 Helene Shay
 Patricia E.M. Whitcombe
 Cecilia J. Woods

HONORARY MEMBERS

Connie Dice
 Patricia T. Hendel
 Patricia Russo

Testimony of
 Natasha M. Pierre, JD, MSW
 Policy & Legislative Director
 The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
 Before the
 Labor and Public Employees Committee
 March 1, 2012

RE: S.B. 150, AAC Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees.

Senators Prague and Guglielmo, Representatives Zalaski and Rigby, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) regarding S.B. 150, AAC Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees.

S.B. 150 would grant paraprofessionals the right to family and medical leave. Passage of this bill would benefit paraprofessionals who work in public elementary and secondary schools.

CT Specific Data

- Families incur income losses ranging from over \$300 to more than \$3,500 per year due to lost wages from the wage-earner's own illnesses.¹
- Families incur losses ranging from \$800 to \$6,900 per year due to lost wages during a family illness.²

Policies to support workers as they provide care for family members or take care of their own health are essential for a strong Connecticut workforce. Nearly 40% of workers are not eligible under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) because they work for businesses with fewer than 50 employees, or their hours are restricted in such a way that the employee never meets the FMLA threshold.¹ Additionally, the occupations that continue to deny FMLA benefits to its employees are occupations that are female dominated, such as the paraprofessionals addressed in this bill.

According to the paraprofessional's union, United Electrical Union Local 22, paraprofessionals work 6.25 hours a day (1,125 a school year), rather than the required 1,250 hours needed to be eligible for FMLA. Paraprofessionals are not allowed to work more than 6.25 hours a day, and therefore should not be penalized for

¹ Women's Union. *The Real Cost of Living and Getting Health Care in Connecticut: The Health Economic Sufficiency Standard*. Prepared for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women and the Foundation for Connecticut Women, February 2006

² *Ibid.*

PCSW Testimony
Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 1, 2012
Page 2 of 2

it. Passage of this bill would assist families to care for themselves and family members when they are ill, and add some protection against loss of income.

Working women of the "sandwich" generation"- those with both minor children and aging parents- are especially vulnerable to needing to take time off from work to care for a family member. Women represent more than two-thirds of adults providing substantial assistance to elderly parents;¹ provide an annual average of \$1,521 in financial support to elderly parents, and spend 23 hours a week (1,210 hours a year), on average, providing care to elderly parents.²

We appreciate your continued attention to this matter, and look forward to working with you on this important issue.

¹National Partnership for Women and Families. *Families Matter*, 2007.

² ABC News Sandwich Generation Faces Masses Stress in Caring for Aging Parents and Kids. March 2008 <
<http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Parenting/story?id=4487229> >

³ Richard W. Johnson and Joshua M. Wiener, "A Profile of Frail Older Americans and Their Caregivers," Urban Institute, The Retirement Project Occasional Paper Number 8, February 2006 Table

⁴ Charles R. Pierret, "The 'sandwich generation': women caring for parents and children," *Monthly Labor Review*, September 2006, Table 2



LABOR & PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE

March 1, 2012

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 90% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to towns and cities.

Senate Bill 150 "An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees"

CCM **opposes SB 150** as a new unfunded state mandate on towns and cities that would require municipalities to provide local paraprofessionals benefits in accordance with the federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), by reducing the number of hours paraprofessional employees of local governments must work in order to qualify for certain family FMLA benefits.

In identical proposals from previous sessions - the non-partisan **Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA) has concluded this would be a "STATE MANDATE" on towns and cities**, which could force "potential costs" on already struggling local budgets. According to OFA, such a proposal could impact approximately 25,000 paraprofessionals statewide - thus, provoking overtime costs and administrative burdens on limited local resources. CCM is also concerned about the precedent this new mandate would set by lowering the threshold for eligibility for this particular benefit.

Although well-intended, this is not the time for new state mandates on local governments.

CCM urges the Committee to **oppose SB 150.**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

If you have any questions, please contact Bob Labanara, Senior Legislative Associate of CCM via email rlabanara@ccm-ct.org or via phone (203) 498-3023.

Testimony of Jane H. Blakeman, Watertown Paraprofessional

Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 1, 2012

S.B. 150 AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE BENEFITS FOR
CERTAIN MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor Committee. My name is Jane H. Blakeman, from Morris here to represent myself and the Watertown Federation of Paraprofessionals. I'd like to address S.B.150 - An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees - Paraprofessional are in integral part of the educational process. We are the "Well Rounded Educators" working in both special education and the mainstream within the scope of the entire curriculum. On a personal note I spend my day going from a metal shop, to freshman English, onto Global Issues and in an AP Government class. That's only the morning! Para's not being covered by FMLA is a multilayer problem for both the para, the students and their families who depend on them. I don't think anyone would argue that academic consistency is key to a students success. So when you have a para that may be One-on-One but needs to take sporadic days off to take care of herself or family member that would impede directly on that students learning. The para must do this to maintain her/his job, it is a stressful time for both her/he and the student to whom she/he is assigned, as well as the teacher with whom she/he works. It is a no win situation for all involved. If she/he was covered under FMLA she/he could take the needed time for her/his situation. This would allow a plan to take place in her/his absence making a smoother transition for the student and class until her/his return

In another case, a para is having a baby and works right up to the due date. She needs to do this so she can save whatever time she has for after the birth. The baby's delivery ended up being a cesarean section which will mean at least a six week recovery. On top of this the baby has some serious medical issues. So now what is the para to do, she is not covered under FMLA. She can't afford to lose her job because she needs her insurance, especially now. Granted she is eligible for COBRA but would not be able to afford it with no pay. At the very least FMLA would give her a secure feeling knowing she had a job to go back to.

Our state is in need of foster and adoptive homes. Paraprofessional's and their families are the sort of family that tend to fill that need. Para's tend to be of the nurturing type. My family and I became licensed a few years ago and took in three siblings. I thought I'd only need a few weeks off to the make the transition, I ended up taking ten. Luckily my job was held because I thought I was covered under FMLA. Many para's who also wanted to become foster parents backed out when they knew their job would be on the line. If they were covered under FMLA just think how many more children may have a home today?

There is also the matter of the discriminatory attitude that my family or my health is not as important as the teacher I work beside every day. She is salaried and I am not. How is the Breast Cancer I fought almost six years ago any less a cancer fight than the bank teller going through the same thing. My father's Alzheimer battle was no less stressful on my family than say the office worker in the building next door whose mother is ill. Paraprofessionals should be entitled to the same FMLA benefits as their co-workers. Reducing the hours from 1250 to 950 would certainly help to alleviate that. Thank you for your time.

Testimony of Sandy Reigal, Hartford Paraprofessional

Labor and Public Employees Committee

March 1, 2012

**S.B. 150 AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN
MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES**

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor Committee. My name is Sandy Reigal. I am here to testify for the FMLA Bill on the floor. I am a Hartford paraprofessional. Well, I was for 33 years, until I had to take a medical retirement on December 9th. February 1st would have been my 34th anniversary of doing a job I loved with all my heart and soul.

I was gravely ill in April of last year. I spent 7 weeks at Hartford Hospital, the first 4 1/2 weeks of which I have no recollection of. The doctors told my family I might not make it. My daughter had to confer with doctors as to my treatment and make very important decisions for me, because I couldn't.

Fortunately, for 33 years, I had accumulated a good bank of sick time to get me through my situation. Many paras now are of much shorter time in the system and don't have sick time built up. It could be any of their close family members, or, the paras themselves, involved in this type of dilemma

Yes, they receive no pay for this time, but at least their jobs would not be in jeopardy. Since paras are ten month positions, I feel strongly that the required hours should and must, be reduced, to protect them.

I am very sad to not be working with my students, and I need to see this bill passed before any more are in my situation.

Thank You for your support,
Sandra L. Reigal
90 Shuttle Meadow Avenue
New Britain, CT 06051

**Testimony of
Catherine Heinze, New Britain Paraprofessional**

Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 1, 2012

S.B. 150 AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE
BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Catherine Heinze and I am a paraprofessional in the New Britain School. I urge you to support SB 150 which reduces the current requirement of 1,250 hours to 950 hours in order to allow paraprofessionals to be eligible for FMLA leave.

Today's paraprofessionals plays an important role in helping to bridge the achievement gap that many of our students are faced with today. They are with these children for five days a week from September to June. And then there is summer break. Unfortunately there are very few para positions available in the summer programs. This would be the only way that a para could meet 1,250 hour requirement. If a paraprofessional had perfect attendance for the whole school year, it would still not be possible for them to attain the required hours. These dedicated people who help students in need, are being denied the right to FMLA.

When my mother was struggling with cancer, I was able to care for her because of the protection of FMLA. Now without FMLA, a para has to decide between their family's needs or the risk of losing their job. In a profession where paraprofessionals educate and care for other people's children, it seems unfair that they risk losing so much if a serious health condition arose and they had to care for their own family. Please support SB 150.

Testimony of
Gwenath Douglas, Special Education Para-Educator
Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals,
AFT Local 2221

**SB 150 - An Act Concerning the FMLA Family Medical Leave
Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees**

The Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 1, 2011

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Mrs. Gwenath Douglas. I am a Para-Educator for Special Education in Hartford and a building union representative. I sit on several committees within the Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals and AFT Connecticut. I would like to speak briefly today about SB 150 An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees.

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides select employees with up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid, employment protected leave per year. It also provides assistance in the fact that their medical benefits continue during this said leave. The FMLA is designed to help employees balance both family and work responsibly. Balance is an important attribute to have in any one person's life and in the workplace, especially where people like us work in education, working directly with meeting the needs of our children, the city of Hartford and the state of Connecticut as a whole.

I support SB 150 because there was a time in my life not too long ago that I suffered greatly without this bill being in place. The fine and outstanding man, to whom I had been married for 14 years, became very ill and suffered a very painful and terminal illness. This was not a short-term one, but very long. I went from wife/lover to care giver, advocate, legal representative, nurses aid, social worker and on top of everything else, provider. My work from the school matched my home. There was never an outlet. You go from high energy to a stress level that causes one to develop different sickness due to depression.

Unable to be with Paul hurt my heart every day. It pulled hard on me not knowing if this would be the last time I see him again. There were times when I had to pick and choose when I could be out of work fearing that I may lose my job. Had I had this benefit in place it would have lessened some of the stress I encountered at that time by being affected by what I had to face every day of our lives together until sadly Paul passed away. I had to go home after putting our students on the bus to face watching my loving husband deteriorate and waste away before my eyes and die and not being able to do anything about it even when I gave my best. He was God's gift to me and I'm glad I stayed. Having the SB 150 bill pass will not only mean so much to me, but to all of us who so greatly deserve it.

I work with students who require so much special and delicate help and services. You go from meeting the needs of your students to going back home to meet the needs of your terminal loved one. This was not an easy task. We are not baby sitters but educators. I testify not just for one, but for all those who have to be a care giver for their loved ones who are suffering today and would benefit from this bill. Allow them to hold their hand one last time and not feel guilty because they were not there until God says otherwise.

Testimony of
Shellye Davis, Paraprofessional
Hartford Federation, AFT Local 2221
SB 150 An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for
Certain Municipal Employees
Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 1, 2012

Good Afternoon, Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Shelly Davis and I am Co-President of the Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals (HFP), AFT Local 2221. As a collective bargaining unit, we represent Paraprofessionals who serve a diverse student population in the City of Hartford's School System. We are also 10-month employees who are not eligible for unemployment.

I would like to speak briefly today in favor of SB 150, An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees.

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provided select employees with up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid employment protected leave per year. It also requires that their group medical benefits continue during the leave. FMLA is designed to help employees balance both family and work responsibility. It also seeks to accommodate the legitimate interest of employers and while promoting equal employment opportunities for both men and woman.

The HFT strongly supports this bill, and the need for our members to be covered by it. As professional public educational employees, it is imperative that we maintain a positive and focused environment for the children and families we serve, including our own. Our lives are parallel to our community; we are susceptible to the same issues confronted daily by all those striving to make a peaceful and responsible life for their love ones and themselves. The anxiety and stress of welcoming a newborn into our family, caring for an ailing spouse, child or parent, or a recovery from an injury or serious health issue, should not have to be compounded by the fear of losing our employment or our health benefits. The members of HFP are some of the most caring, creative and resourceful paraprofessionals (and people) in the country. The commitment and dedication of these men and woman, who serve the Hartford School System, is unparalleled. They richly deserve to have the peace of mind in knowing their service to the community is important.

The triumphs and the tragedies that inevitably affect all lives should not be compounded by the taking of one's livelihood. People need to be able to take care of themselves and their family. In the grander scheme of things, we all benefit! Please help us, I urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify before you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



**Testimony
Bart Russell
Executive Director
Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST)
Before the Labor Committee
March 1, 2012**

**RE: SB-150 AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE BENEFITS
FOR CERTAIN MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES.**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) *opposes* SB-150 - An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits For Certain Municipal Employees, which requires municipalities to grant certain ineligible municipal paraprofessionals the right to family and medical leave (FMLA).

In previous years, the Office of Fiscal Analysis identified expansion of FMLA as a potentially costly "state mandate" on municipalities. In fact, the bill would disproportionately impact smaller communities, which may not be able to afford to operate with employees absent for prolonged periods of time. Smaller towns are not in a position to absorb the cost of paying and training a replacement worker for the employee on leave or pay coworkers overtime to share the expanded workload.

This bill will impose significant costs on towns and cities resulting from net labor replacement costs as well as training and supervision for those replacement workers. It also imposes an administrative and staffing burden on our schools and town halls. According to the Society of Human Resource Management, 30% of leave under FMLA is intermittent leave, which is taken sporadically throughout the year, without much, if any, notice to the school system. If a school is unable to find an aide or substitute to fill in, they may have to hire a temporary worker to fill the position while the paraprofessional is gone. Not only will this be costly, it will prove very disruptive for the school system as well as the students.

Under federal law, local government employees must provide at least 1,250 hours of service and have worked for the previous 12 months in order to be eligible for FMLA benefits. This bill amends the federal law and lowers the threshold to 950 hours of service, greatly expanding the number of individuals covered under FMLA. According to the Department of Labor Wage and Workplace Statistics Division, in reviewing a similar provision, it is estimated that an additional 25,000 paraprofessionals would be eligible for FMLA, increasing administrative and wage

replacement costs to municipalities. Moreover, the annualized ongoing fiscal impacts would continue into the future subject to inflation.

It is also troubling that the legislation seeks to amend eligibility criteria set by *federal law* with a *state law*. This creates confusion regarding whether federal FMLA regulations, which include special provisions for employees of local education agencies, would be applicable to such paraprofessionals. For example, federal regulations allow leave taken by employees of local education agencies to be prorated based on the average number of hours worked in the 12 weeks prior to the beginning of the leave. It is unclear whether these provisions remain applicable.

In addition, by extending the FMLA to paraprofessionals, SB-150 opens the door wide open for other municipal employees that do not meet the current eligibility criteria outlined under federal law to request legislation to extend them the same FMLA benefits. This sets a very bad precedent and could result in a patchwork of family and medical leave laws that would be cumbersome and costly for municipalities to administer.

Moreover, educator professionals are generally subject to the Municipal Employee Relations Act and, as such, issues involving wage and benefits are subject to collective bargaining. Provisions regarding various aspects of the Family and Medical Leave Act are generally addressed within the scope of such collective bargaining agreements.

COST urges opposition to this bill, which would impose yet another unfunded mandate and financial burden on towns and cities that will further strain local resources. **Given the fiscal challenges facing the state and municipalities, we urge lawmakers to reject passage of any additional unfunded mandates and, instead, support passage of mandate relief measures.**

Therefore, COST urges your *opposition to SB-150*.

Connecticut Council of Small Towns
1245 Farmington Avenue, 101 West Hartford, CT 06107
860-676-0770 860-676-2662 Fax

HB 5203
HB 5238

Council 4 AFSCME Testimony

Labor and Public Employees Committee - March 1, 2012

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

Council 4 supports S.B. No. 150 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES. Approximately, 3,000 of these members are paraprofessional educators.

This bill extends Family and Medical Leave to paraprofessionals. FMLA allows workers to take a leave of absence (up to 12 weeks if they have worked the previous 12 months), unpaid, if they, a spouse, child or parent become ill (or in case of the first year of a child's birth, an adoption or to donate organs or bone marrow). FMLA is generally the sort of thing that people do not want to use unless there is a dire need. Very few families can afford to take unpaid time and lose income for any reason. Employers have the right to make employees use any vacation time or sick time for FMLA.

Paraprofessionals are unable to utilize the state provision of the law because they routinely work under the requisite 1,250 hours per year. This bill sets the requirement for paraprofessionals at 950 hours per year. This change would allow for this large segment of workers, who are called upon to provide very valuable societal service often under very trying circumstances (such as providing educational services to children with special needs), to have a right that our country provides to almost every other type of worker. This bill provides basic fairness.

Council 4 supports H.B. No. 5233 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION FOR FIREFIGHTERS. Thankfully, such cases where a firefighter witnesses another firefighter's death are rare. Yet this bill simply asks for human decency for workers who regularly risk their lives, health and mental health at a difficult and necessary job.

Council 4 opposes H.B. No. 5201 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING DEADLINES FOR THE COMPLETION OF MUNICIPAL BINDING ARBITRATION

Council 4 opposes this bill because it tampers with the existing arbitration time frame. Changing this results in a less flexible situation which could inadvertently force municipalities and unions into going to binding arbitration when it is not necessary. It is best to avoid arbitration when it can be avoided because it can take up to two years to resolve and results in additional costs for both parties.

-MORE-

Testimony of Dawn M. Repoli, Colchester Paraprofessional

Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 1, 2012

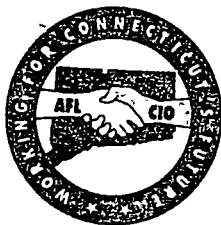
S.B. 150 AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN
- MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor Committee. This letter is both a testimony and a heartfelt request. Neither have any negative implications on the wonderful Colchester school district, Board of Education or school, JJIS, that I am employed. I have worked here for eight years and have utmost respect for and gratitude toward the entire district. I implore you to consider decreasing the number of work hours that is currently in place for eligibility of the Family and Medical Leave Act.

There have been two situations in my life where not having the Family Medical Leave Act in place for paraprofessionals would have drastically affected my immediate and extended family. During the following trials, I was either a one on one special education paraprofessional or a special education resource paraprofessional. In 2007, my mom had a valve replacement and actually died on the table three times. We were told not to expect her to survive. Miraculously, she came out of the surgery into ICU in a coma, touch and go for seven days. My brother, sister, father and I never left the hospital, sleeping on the waiting room floor, showering where we could. I did not know what the future held. As understanding as my boss was, I knew that if the situation did not improve and I needed to take extended time off above and beyond personal days that I may lose my job. In 2010, my youngest son, Joseph, was diagnosed with Supraventricular tachycardia. There were many appointments prior to and following the surgery. His heart surgery was at Boston Children's Hospital. There was a great deal of time invested in travel. As you can imagine, the stress and worry was all consuming. I was even more saddened thinking that I may need to take extended time off to care for my son and not have the peace of mind that my job would be there for me when this life trial was over.

Please put yourself in the shoes of a people that are not eligible for FMLA. Please decrease the number of hours of work in order to qualify for the Family Medical Leave Act. The FMLA would provide much needed peace of mind to a group of dedicated, compassionate professionals.

Respectfully,
Dawn M. Repoli
Jack Jackter Intermediate School
215 Halls Hill Road
Colchester, CT 06415
860-537-9421



CONNECTICUT AFL-CIO

56 Town Line Road, Rocky Hill, CT 06067

860-571-6191

fax 860-571-6190

**Testimony of Lori J. Pelletier
Secretary-Treasurer, Connecticut AFL-CIO
March 1, 2012 before the Labor and Public Employees Committee**

Good afternoon Senator Prague and Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor and Public Employees committee. My name is Lori Pelletier and I serve as the Secretary -Treasurer of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, and I am here to testify on behalf of our 900 affiliated local unions who represent over 200,000 union members from all 169 cities and towns.

SB 179 HB 5240 HB 5201
HB 5202 HB 5203 HB 5238

I am here to testify on the following bills:

S.B. No. 150 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES.

We support this legislation. Paraprofessionals are an important component of our education system and provide our children with guidance and care. In return for their dedicated service it is only right that the FMLA be extended to these workers. We applaud all of the advocates and legislators from both sides of the aisle for their work on this bill and look forward to the Governor's signature when it becomes law.

H.B. No. 5233 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION FOR FIREFIGHTERS.

We strongly support this bill. Everyday these workers risk their lives for us, and when one of their own is killed right in front of them we should provide them with the necessary protection in return. My brother is a firefighter and I know first hand what they go through.

When Captain John Keane was killed three years ago in Waterbury his brothers and sisters had to deal with that death not only as a coworker but as a union brother. The fire service is truly a band of brothers (and sisters) and as a society we should not hesitate to extend to them this protection in return for them putting their lives in the line.

PRESIDENT John W Olsen	1st VICE PRESIDENT Sharon M Palmer	VICE PRESIDENTS John Ahern John A. Altieri Linda Armstrong Tammie Botelho Beverley Brakeman Calvin Bunnell Wayne J Burgess Michael Calderon Peter S Carozza, Jr Peter Carroll Carol Censki	Frank Cirillo Everett C Corey Kenneth DeLaCruz John H Dirzius Alvin Douglas Steven R Ferrucci III Betty Gadson John Gentile Bill Henderson Keri Hoehne Kathleen S Jackson Clarke King	Thomas Ledoux Glenn Marshall John McCarthy Ronald McLellan Jean Morningstar James Parent Warren Pepicelli Melodie Peters Michael Petosa Ronald Petronella Roberta Price Robert Proto	Peter Reilly Carmen Reyes David Roche Edward Sasso Valerie Stewart William Shortell Ray Soucy James R Wallace, Jr Paul Wallace Kurt Westby Anthony Zona
SECRETARY-TREASURER Lori J Pelletier	2nd VICE PRESIDENT Mark A Espinosa				
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT Salvatore Luciano	3rd VICE PRESIDENT Benedict W Cozzi				
GENERAL VICE PRESIDENT Thomas Wilkinson	4th VICE PRESIDENT Jeffrey H Matchett				
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY Leo Canty					