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Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 13, 2013

Testimony in Support of House Bill #6553

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE INSURANCE

Submitted by Nora Duncan, State Director

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of more than 37 million, nearly 600,000 of whom live right here in Connecticut, which helps people age 50 and up turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, caregiving, employment security and retirement planning.

I am here today to testify in support House Bill #6553, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE INSURANCE. AARP is supportive of efforts at the state and federal level that increase paid leave and cover more workers for longer periods of time so that employees can both attend to their own health needs and care for loved ones. This bill provides an opportunity to bring a variety of key constituencies to the table to explore policy options that might provide relief to employees who find themselves in difficult health-care situations without placing undo burden on employers or the State of Connecticut.

AARP's support of family caregivers is extensive; supporting legal and system reforms, programs and services, as well as much needed respite programs. Support of the family caregiver has a trickle-down effect that is good for our economy and our society. The 711,000 family caregivers in Connecticut gave 465 million hours of free home care worth \$5.8 billion in 2009. When family care givers are supported, they are better able to provide free care, reducing the incidences and costs of hospitalizations and institutional care, something the business community, advocates and families all agree makes for good common sense policy.

Since my first month on the job at AARP, about 8 months ago, I have been managing the long-term absence of a staff member with health concerns. We have a small office in here in Connecticut, but are lucky to be part of a larger national organization that is generous in its FMLA, etc. From a business perspective, I have learned that when dealing with a long-term absence it is particularly useful to be able to plan. Employees who have resources that allow them to better manage their personal priorities in times of a health crisis, be it their own or that of a family member, have the tools that make it easier for employers to manage their business priorities.

I encourage you to support this bill and to be as inclusive as possible in the membership of the Task Force. If any key constituencies or interest groups feel that they do not have a meaningful voice in the process, there will not be a meaningful dialogue. Thanks and I very much appreciate your time and consideration.

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