



DATE: March 12, 2019
TO: Labor and Public Employees Committee
FROM: Jeff Shaw, Senior Director of Public Policy & Advocacy, The Alliance
RE: S.B. 881 An Act Establishing a Paid Family and Medical Leave Program

Good afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, Senator Miner, Representative Polletta and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

My name is Jeff Shaw, Senior Director of Public Policy & Advocacy, of the Connecticut Community Nonprofit Alliance (The Alliance). The Alliance is the statewide advocacy organization representing nonprofits, with a membership of more than 300 community organizations and associations. Nonprofits deliver essential services to more than half a million people each year and employ almost 14% of Connecticut's workforce.

The Alliance supports the intent of S.B. 881 An Act Establishing a Paid Family and Medical Leave Program, but has concerns we respectfully ask the Committee to address in the final legislation. The legislation creates a Family and Medical Leave Insurance Trust Fund for employees to pay into and use for family and medical leave. We applaud the intent of the program to allow people to care for their personal health and well-being of a loved one, and not risk losing their jobs or earnings. No one should have to choose between going to work to pay for groceries, the mortgage or utility bills and caring for themselves or a loved one who is ill.

To implement the intent of S.B. 881 successfully, contract amounts for nonprofits that provide community services on behalf of the State must be adjusted to build in protections and ensure resources are available to cover increased costs, such as funding vacancies and temporary workers, at a sustainable rate. We urge you to provide for that in any legislation that is passed that would implement this program.

Community nonprofits have experienced years of budget cuts or flat funding as the need for community services continues to grow. Staff is already lean at many health and human service organizations that also require minimum staffing levels for challenging populations needing 24-hour care and support, making it nearly impossible for current employees to absorb the responsibilities of employee(s) on leave. Further, finding qualified and experienced temporary employees could prove difficult as many health and human services positions require specific knowledge, experience and familiarity with a program or specific population served.

Nonprofits that contract with the State to provide essential services can only afford to hold vacancies and positions to the extent that the state contracts pay them for the costs of doing so. Failure on the part of the State to increase contract amounts as part of S.B. 881's implementation may result in fewer programs and fewer people receiving services that the nonprofits provide.

Community nonprofits contract with the State to provide services; they cannot raise taxes or increase prices in the face of increased costs, meaning they are forced to cut services, lay-off employees or close programs if they are forced to incur increased costs without increased funding. Nonprofits want to provide excellent benefits for their employees, but the State needs to make sure there are reasonable ways to pay for it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.