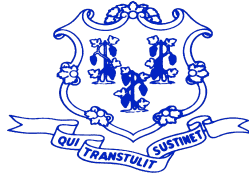


The Connecticut General Assembly



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COMMITTEE APPROVES FONTANA BILL TO EXPAND HEALTH BENEFITS FOR UNEMPLOYED WORKERS

State Representative **Steve Fontana** (D-North Haven), chair of the state legislature's Insurance & Real Estate Committee, announced that a bill extending COBRA coverage for unemployed workers from 18 months to 30 months passed the Insurance Committee.

"Thousands of Connecticut families have been hit hard by this economy and are now on the verge on losing their health insurance," said Representative Fontana. "This bill will ensure that they continue to have access to affordable health coverage for another year."

The Insurance Committee approved legislation that will provide people with the option of continuing their employer sponsored health coverage under COBRA for a total of 30 months after they are laid off. Under federal COBRA law, former employees who choose to temporarily stay on their employer's group policy pay 100% of the premium cost and may stay on the policy for up to 18 months. This would simply allow Connecticut residents to retain their COBRA benefits for an additional 12 months, without a subsidy. It will allow them to take advantage of group insurance rates, while they look for employment and replacement health coverage.

The federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) allows employees at businesses with 20 or more employees to continue their health insurance coverage after leaving their employment. Connecticut, however, also has its own "mini COBRA" law that applies to employers regardless of size, including those with fewer than 20 employees, and requires that, if a person's prior plan covered a preexisting condition, the condition must also be covered under COBRA.

House Bill 5219, An Act Extending State Continuation of Health Insurance Coverage, will now go to the full House of Representatives for consideration.

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