



February 14, 2018

Chair Holvey, members of the committee:

My name is Thomas Taylor. I am a state employee and have been for nearly 15 years. I am also a member of SEIU Local 503. I am here to testify in support of HB 4123 in my position as a member of the union.

I started working for the state when I was 19. When I was first hired with the State I would tell people where I worked and the one thing I always heard in response over and over again was "wow, the State has great benefits. That's a great place to work." However, since that time it has been nothing but take away after take away and I must admit I am beyond upset and greatly displeased by this current situation. It began shortly after I started back in 2002 and has steadily declined. It first started with freezes and furloughs and now to paying a portion of our health care and getting little to no cost of living increases. Now, after the passage of SB 1067 last session, my family will lose medical benefits only because my wife is also a state employee. One has to wonder why anyone would come to work for the state anymore.

My wife and I were married in March of 2011. Before that time we each had our own healthcare as we both work for the State. She has a daughter from a previous marriage and then we gave birth to our son in March of 2012. Without the double coverage that we get through the State I don't know where we would be today. That coverage was there for the birth of my son. Allows my wife and I to go to our doctors' appointments without having to pay most copays. Dentist visits are mostly without copays. Prescriptions, even with the copays going up, were always covered. Glasses are mostly covered. It has been a huge incentive for us to continue to work for the State. Especially considering we could likely make more in take home pay in the private sector. My son was also recently diagnosed with asthma and, thankfully, with our double coverage we don't have to worry about the cost of his inhalers.

I think it's also important to note that the term "double coverage" is a bit misleading. I say this because it's not the same coverage that I get with my primary. It's treated more like a secondary coverage and is significantly reduced from the primary. That said, it's still leaps and bounds better than it would be without it and it's something my family has come to depend on. Even with both of our coverages my wife and I still invest into the Flexible spending account and put aside \$1200/year

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to cover the rest of our deductibles and copays. It adds up very quickly and it's nice knowing that I don't have to worry about these things. It's a huge reason why my wife and I continue to stay working with the State rather than seeking more gainful employment elsewhere.

The idea that two workers who sit next to each other every day might receive a different level of benefits simply due to who they are married to is inherently unfair. If both spouses work for the State then we should each be afforded the benefits as such. You would never see a practice like this in the private sector.

You have to ask yourself what this policy change is going to cost the state. With an economy like this, employees have lots of choices. The state is looking less and less appealing to workers like me and to folks entering the workforce. And for what benefit? I have yet to hear how much money this is going to save the state. Even if there are meager savings to be had, you should not be balancing the budget on the backs of workers.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my story.