HF 11 – Sick and Safe Leave

1. Mister chair and members of the committee, good afternoon, my name is Bruce Nustad and I work for the members of the Minnesota Retailers Association. We are a group of retailers across the state that serve customers in partnership with our employees. I appreciate the opportunity to share some perspectives on HF 11 today.
2. First and foremost, in my conversations with my members, one thing is always clear when talking about employee compensation and benefits. My members have a strong and deep recognition of the importance of employees, and with that comes a commitment to taking care of employees to the best of that employer’s ability.
3. For some retailers, the best of that ability includes policies for full-time and part-time employees that provide paid time off for illness and many other reasons—and many of those policies offer compensation, and equally as important, flexibility for the employee. Some of those policies existing today likely exceed what is outlined in HF 11.  And other policies may meet the spirit of Rep. Lesch’s bill but not be perfectly compliant with each and every provision.
4. Again, I haven’t met a retailer across this state that doesn’t want to take good care of their employees.  Unfortunately, not all retail business models support the level of benefit outlined in this bill. Sometimes those that aren’t able to reach this level of benefit or the spirit of it are small businesses, family-owned business, or new American businesses, where frequently family members work together in the business. Often in these businesses there are hopes, aspirations and plans for growth, and at the same time there are the realities of competitive constraints to the business model. In these cases, I often hear about how the focus surrounding time-off centers on flexibility and working with the employee to create a situation that works for the employee and the employer.
5. As this bill is considered by the House, we would ask that there be a recognition of the various business models and approaches to time-off. A good start would be a mechanism to deem policies that meet or exceed the spirit of the bill as complaint. In addition, we would ask for flexibility for business models that today can’t support this level of paid leave, but offer other options for employees.
6. Mister chair, thank you again to you and the committee for the opportunity to testify today.

If questioned what specifics we would offer I would indicate a desire to work with the bill author and discuss specifics, thus positioning us further in the conversation.

MnRA’s positioning on leave is:

*The Minnesota Retailers Association’s approach and advocacy efforts related to paid leave are led by two principles: compassion for the needs and concerns of employees, without devaluing the importance of our members’ business realities. There are many competing perspectives regarding paid leave policies, but MnRA remains committed to engaging in a thoughtful dialogue and representing the interests of our retailers and, equally as important, the employees who make their business possible.*