Good morning Chairman Egan and members of the committee. My name is Anthony Russo. I am the Executive Vice President of Government Affairs and Communications for the Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey (CIANJ). The CIANJ is a statewide business advocacy group, with offices in Paramus and Trenton, representing more than 900 members from virtually every business sector.

I am here today in opposition to A-2354 because we believe the decision on how to compensate employees, whether salary or fringe benefits, is strictly a business decision and should not be mandated by government. In addition to the points raised in the Business Coalition’s memo opposing the legislation, of which CIANJ is a member, CIANJ offers the following testimony:

- Mandating the amount of sick time a business must give to its employees is tantamount to dictating how a business should operate. This is not government’s role or responsibility. We fully respect and appreciate the intent of the legislation and the role of government when it comes to enacting anti-discrimination and harassment legislation, the setting of workplace safety standards, etc. but what we oppose is government’s involvement in the compensation of employees, especially when it is private capital that is being invested in the business.

- Paid time off is a benefit that many companies utilize to retain employees and attract new ones. The number of days offered varies from company to company and industry to industry. Many factors go into the establishment of a benefits program and no one model or approach is ideal for every business. The important thing to highlight is that it should be market driven and not government mandated.

- Our members appreciate the value their employees bring to their businesses and do not take them for granted. For most businesses, personnel is by far the largest expense line in their budget. Many businesses offer generous paid time off programs and provide the needed flexibility to employees when the need arises to tend to themselves or to sick family members.

- This legislation will simply add additional burdens onto employers and increase the likelihood of litigation from disgruntled employees.

- The Legislature should build on the success of the New Jersey Economic Opportunity Act of 2013 and pass additional legislation that attracts new investment and private sector job growth in New Jersey rather than add another which makes businesses think twice about choosing New Jersey.

We respectfully urge Committee Members to vote no on the bill. Thank you.