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Dear Chair Champion and Committee Members,

AFSCME Council 65 represents 13,000 public service workers across Greater Minnesota. Our members work in cities, counties, schools, and hospitals providing the vital services that make our communities safe, vibrant, and healthy.

AFSCME Council 65 has worked on and supported Paid Family & Medical Leave (PFML) for years. Last year's historic PFML legislation recognized that no Minnesotan should be forced to risk their job or their family's financial stability just to take time to care for their loved ones. We are incredibly proud to have been a part of passing such an important bill.

That is why we strongly oppose any bill that contains the language included in the A-7 amendment to SF 5430. When Governor Walz signed last year's PFML bill into law, he and the Legislature made a commitment to Minnesotans. A commitment that, when they need it, workers will have access to 12 weeks of paid leave. Anything short of that is an unacceptable bait and switch on workers.

Cutting the PFML benefit for workers with more than 80 hours of accrued PTO creates an inequitable two-tiered system. Many workers, including our members, have negotiated, earned, and saved their PTO for years. Often workers budget PTO payout for retirement income or healthcare. Instead, the language in the A-7 amendment punishes these workers, forcing them to use their PTO to access the same PFML others receive immediately.

This version of a PTO buydown is similar to many versions which were proposed during the 2023 session, all of which were forcefully rejected by labor organizations and ultimately by legislators. Now is not the time to resurrect this attack on Minnesota's working families. We strongly urge you to oppose the A-7 amendment to SF 5430

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