

Testimony of Patricia Graham, Paraprofessional
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HB 5465 An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees

The Labor and Public Employees Committee
February 10, 2011

Dear Labor and Public Employees Committee Members,

I am writing to you today instead of appearing in person, due to work and time constraints. I would ask you to lower the minimum work hour standard necessary for paraprofessionals to qualify for F.M.L.A. In doing so you will ensure that those of us who work full time, but still fall short of the current minimum requirement would gain access to the F.M.L.A. benefits that the original legislation was intended to provide.

When a loved one is sick or dying and in need of care, no one should have to choose between providing the care that is needed and keeping their job. In the present economy, none of us can afford to lose our job and some of us cannot afford to pay to provide care for our loved one at home

As a single mother myself and the daughter of elderly parents, I have already felt the need that F.M.L.A. was legislated to address. When a child is sick at home they want and need the support and care of someone they know and trust. Sometimes there simply is no substitute for a parent's love and care.

The same is true with our aging parents. Four years ago my 87 year old mother was diagnosed with stomach cancer. It became necessary for me to take time off from work to care for her. During that time I was warned that excessive absenteeism could result in termination of employment. Needless to say it was a very stressful time. More recently this past November my now 91 year old mother fell and broke her hip. Again, I am concerned about having to take the time off from work, but there is just no other way to ensure that she gets the care she needs and deserves.

For these reasons and so many others, I plead with you to support legislation to decrease the number of work hours required to qualify for F.M.L.A. In doing so, you will allow other working families to provide the kind of care and support you yourselves would want to be able to provide to or receive from a loved one without the added stress and fear of losing your job and providing your family the security that that brings.