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**TESTIMONY OF KERRY FLORIO**

**Before the Connecticut General Assembly Joint Labor and Employment Committee on**

**Senate Bill 913: AN ACT MANDATING EMPLOYERS PROVIDE PAID SICK LEAVE TO EMPLOYEES**

**MARCH 1, 2011**

Good afternoon. Thank you for holding this hearing on the importance of paid sick days and for allowing me the opportunity to speak.

My name is Kerry Florio. I'm a lifelong resident of Connecticut. I grew up, live and work in Norwalk. I'm also a mom. My beautiful son Erik is about to turn 1 in just a few days.

For the last three years I've worked at Norwalk Hospital. As a health care worker, I know firsthand the value of paid sick days. In fact, I work as a unit secretary on the oncology ward where many of our patients are immuno-compromised and are put at serious risk of infection and additional medical complications when exposed unnecessarily to germs and illnesses.

Luckily my employer offers paid sick days. This is incredibly important to me, not just from an occupational safety perspective but also as a working single mother.

Like most mothers of small children I've had to miss several days of work since Erik was born because he's been sick. I even had to take him to the ER once. It all began when over the course of several hours it became apparent that Erik was having trouble breathing. At one point while trying to comfort him, I looked down at him and said, "I don't think you can breathe baby." He whimpered through a wheeze and I knew it was time to get him to the emergency room.

We were in the ER from 10:30 at night to one in the morning. The ER physician felt it was an ear infection but suggested consulting with Erik's pediatrician the next morning. I was lucky to be able to see Erik's pediatrician the next morning at 9 AM. The pediatrician was worried that Erik had RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) which can lead to pneumonia, lung failure and in rare cases death. He gave us a course of treatment and asked me to return the following day again for a check in. Erik was a trooper through this whole ordeal, I was so proud of him.

Because of this unexpected visit I ended missing 16 hours, or two shifts at work. But because I have paid sick days, I didn't have to worry about losing pay or my job. Instead, I could concentrate on being the best parent possible to my little boy when he needed me most.

And that means a lot to me as a parent. It also meant a lot to me as a health worker and future nurse (I'm earning my Bachelor of Nursing Science right now)-- knowing that I don't compromise our patients fragile health by going to work ill.

But unfortunately too many families – including families of my patients – don't have paid sick days. When they get sick or their children get sick, they face impossible choices.

That's one of the reasons I joined MomsRising, and why I'm here today – to advocate for the moms and families who don't have paid sick days.

I am honored to be here today, to take part in this hearing, and to have a chance to tell my story. I hope it will make a difference and convince you to pass the paid sick days bill so all workers will be able to earn paid sick days. Thank you.