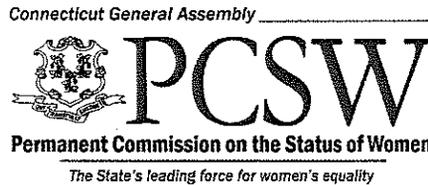


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**Testimony of
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 1, 2011**

RE: S.B. 913, AA Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees

Senators Prague and Guglielmo, Representatives Zalaski and Rigby, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) in response to the above reference bill.

S.B. 913, would require employers of 50 or more employees to provide paid sick leave to their employees for (1) the employee's own illness or need for preventative health care, (2) the illness of an employees child, parent or spouse and (3) if an employee is a victim of family violence or sexual assault. Passage of this bill would positively impact the 550,000 employees in Connecticut who do not have access to a single paid sick day. The effects of this lack of paid sick leave span across all age brackets of women, including pregnant women, women with children and women caring for elderly parents.

Women and families are disproportionately affected by the lack of paid sick leave, in large part because most women remain the main caregivers of their families. If a woman needs to take a sick day for herself or a dependent family member but lacks paid leave, her options are limited: take unpaid leave and possibly risk her economic well-being or neglect her own health and/or the health of her loved ones.

Pregnant Women

Pregnant women that are in the workforce typically need more time off to take care of their prenatal health which is critical for a healthy pregnancy and the development of a healthy child. Babies of mothers who do not get prenatal care are three times more likely to have a low birth weight and five times more likely to die than those born to mothers who do get care.

In addition, nearly one third of pregnant will have some kind of pregnancy-related complication. Those who do not get adequate prenatal care run the risk that such complications will go undetected or won't be dealt

with soon enough. That, in turn, can lead to potentially serious consequences for both the mother and her baby.¹ Lastly, women with high-risk pregnancies conceivably need the most time off from work because they need to be monitored on a more regular basis.

Gender Specific Data:

- Typically a pregnant woman sees her doctor: once a month for weeks 4-28; twice a month for weeks 28-36; and every week after week 36 until birth.
- If a pregnant woman is over the age of 35 or is high-risk, she likely needs to see her doctor more frequently.

Working Mothers

Seventy-one percent of mothers with children under age 18 are in the workforce.² Working women are significantly more likely than men to take time off from work to care for a sick child. In the case of an urgently sick child, almost 78% of women take time off from work, while just 26.5% of men take off.³ On average, working parents need to take around four days off per year to care for each school-age child, given the incidence of illness among school-age children.⁴

While paid sick days are important for women as caregivers, this reform is also essential in protecting women's economic security, family economic stability and the health of the general public:

Women's Economic Security - According to Forbes Magazine, because they need to care for sick children, 49% of women report they have lost pay or job promotions or have struggled to retain their jobs, while only 28% of men experienced the same problems. Job losses among low-income American women are most frequently the result of the birth or illness of a child.⁵

Family Economic Stability - As the earnings of women in the workforce have increased, so has their contribution to family income. In 2008, employed women in dual-earner households contributed an average of 44% of annual family income.⁶ Therefore, without paid sick leave, the loss of a working mother's income could have a detrimental effect on her family's economic well-being.

Public Health - Parents' report that paid leave is the primary factor in their decisions about staying home when their children are sick. Parents with sick leave or vacation leave were 5 times as likely to care for their sick children as those who didn't have these employment benefits.⁷ When parents cannot care for sick children and they must attend child care, it takes a toll on the health of the child, other children and child care providers. The effects are similar to having sick adults at work: increased contagion and higher rates of infection for all children in care.⁸ Lastly, studies show that children recover faster when cared for by their parents. When parents can take leave to care for their children, children have a faster recovery time, and health care expenditures are reduced.⁹

¹ Kids Health, Medical Care During Pregnancy <http://kidshealth.org/parent/pregnancy_center/your_pregnancy/medical_care_pregnancy.html>

² Families and Work Institute, Times Are Changing: Gender and Generation at Work and at Home, 2009
<http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/Times_Are_Changing.pdf>

³ The American Association of Psychotherapy, Working Women More Likely Than Men to Stay Home With a Sick Child, Spring 2008
<<http://www.annalsofpsychotherapy.com/articles/spring08.php?topic=article5>>

⁴ The National Partnership for Women and Families, Paid Sick Days are Good for Kids
<<http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/Children.pdf?docID=124>>

⁵ Forbes, U.S. Far Behind in Workers Rights, 2009 <<http://www.forbes.com/2009/11/19/paid-sick-leave-vacation-forbes-woman-leadership-workers-rights.html>>

⁶ Families and Work Institute, Times Are Changing: Gender and Generation at Work and at Home, 2009
<http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/Times_Are_Changing.pdf>

⁷ The National Partnership for Women and Families, Paid Sick Days are Good for Kids
<<http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/Children.pdf?docID=124>>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Gender Specific Data:

- Seventy-five percent of women living in poverty do not get paid when they must miss work to care for a sick child.¹⁰

Women Caring for Aging Parents

Another segment of the population that is greatly affected by the lack of paid sick leave are working women that are caring for an aging parent(s). Additionally, studies show that the “sandwich generation” is growing fairly rapidly. The sandwich generation is comprised of working people that find themselves caring for both minor children and aging parents, the majority of whom are women. Women represent more than two-thirds of adults providing substantial assistance to elderly parents,¹¹ provide an annual average of \$1,521 in financial support to elderly parents, and spend an average of 23 hours a week (1,210 hours a year) providing care to elderly parents.¹² As Connecticut’s elderly population grows, more workers will struggle to balance their work responsibilities with caring for their families.

Gender Specific Data:

- According to a new survey by the AARP- and MetLife-funded National Alliance for Caregiving, an estimated 43.5 million adults in the U.S. are looking after an older relative or friend. Of these, 43% said they did not feel they had a choice in this role. And although 7 in 10 said another unpaid caregiver had provided help in the past year, only 1 in 10 said the burden was split equally.¹³
- Middle-aged women, many of whom are employed, provide the majority of care to older frail, disabled, and chronically ill relatives. On average women who provide care to aging parents curtail their hours of paid work by 43% in order to do so.¹⁴

The increasing labor force participation of women, along with older relatives living longer but with chronic illness, raises important questions about how effectively and at what cost the roles of family caregiver and worker can be combined.¹⁵ The PCSW believes paid sick leave is an essential workplace reform that will help working women of all ages balance their careers, their personal health and the health of their families without risking their economic well-being. We applaud the committee for your attention to this important issue.

¹⁰ The Institute for Women’s Policy Research, *Women and Paid Sick Days: Crucial for Family Well-being*, 2007 <http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/B254_paid sick days FS.pdf>

¹¹ Richard W. Johnson and Joshua M. Wiener, “A Profile of Frail Older Americans and Their Caregivers,” Urban Institute, *The Retirement Project Occasional Paper* Number 8, February 2006 Table

¹² Charles R. Pierret, “The ‘sandwich generation’: women caring for parents and children,” *Monthly Labor Review*, September 2006, Table 2.

¹³ Time Magazine, 2010 <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1955601,00.html>>

¹⁴ Richard W. Johnson and Joshua M. Wiener, “A Profile of Frail Older Americans and Their Caregivers,” Urban Institute, *The Retirement Project Occasional Paper* Number 8, February 2006 Table

¹⁵ The Metlife Study of Working Caregivers and Employer Health Care Costs, 2010 <<http://www.metlife.com/assets/cao/mmi/publications/studies/2010/mmi-working-caregivers-employers-health-care-costs.pdf>>

