

**Amanda Seltzer, University of Connecticut School of Social Work
Labor and Public Employees Committee Hearing, March 12, 2013**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Amanda Seltzer and I am a student at the University Of Connecticut School Of Social Work. I am here today in support of Raised Bill 6553 which would establish a Task Force to study Family Medical Leave Insurance.

Specifically, I am interested in the group of workers who are unable to work due to the need to care for a seriously ill child, spouse, or parent. It is extremely important that the task force has members of the public who represent organizations that advocate for individuals with chronic or acute illnesses, as mentioned in the raised bill text.

The amount of money that a family spends when a worker is on leave in order to care for a sick spouse or child is exorbitant. I hope the proposed task force would look into this and take into account the income lost while caretaking a sick family member is simply unfair and frankly, unacceptable. The amount of money lost while out of work can be the difference maker in the adequate treatment of a family member.

I was one of the many sick children that a parent had to care for when I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma at age 24. I had to go on medical leave from my job in New York and return to Connecticut in order to undergo chemotherapy. My mother was forced to miss countless hours of work for an entire year as a result of my extensive treatment. Fortunately, I had family members that did not work and were able to care for me concurrently so that my mother did not need to formally register under FMLA.

I can honestly say I do not know what my family's financial situation would be today had we had to fully rely on my mother as my sole caretaker with no income at the time we needed it most. Cancer is an expensive disease. Each treatment cost thousands of dollars; 12 chemotherapy rounds, 6 rounds of a targeted drug, as well as 30 radiation treatments. How can a child fighting for their life manage the cost of quality care if their parents are on unpaid leave? Doesn't this seem wrong? If FMLA allows parents the right to care for a child in order to watch them survive and succeed, how can we not provide the tools and finances to properly do so?

Establishing this task force could not come at a more appropriate time. In a 2000 study by the Department of Labor, 53.8% of leave-takers worried about not having enough money for bills, a higher percentage than those who took leave and were worried about job security. Furthermore, 50.9% of those surveyed would have taken leave for a longer period of time had some/additional pay been received. 47% had to rely on money in savings meant for something else, and some had to put off paying bills in order to simply survive. This is deplorable. People are hurting. When a family is hurting because of cancer, or any other chronic or acute disease, there is no reason that finances need to be added to the stressors. Wondering if your child will live to see their next birthday is enough of a stressor, don't you think?

It is my hope that this proposed task force is implemented and recommends insurance and short-term benefits to those families taking care of sick loved ones. Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions you have to the best of my ability.