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**March 12, 2013**  
**Written Testimony of CT NOW**  
**in support of R.B. 6653 An Act Establishing a Task Force to**  
**Study Family Medical Leave Insurance**

On behalf of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Organization for Women (CT NOW), we want to express our strong support of *Raised Bill 6653, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Family Medical Leave Insurance*.

Family Medical Leave Insurance (FMLI) is greatly needed as nearly 50 percent of workers are not eligible for unpaid leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) because they work for businesses that employ less than 50 workers. Further, FMLI would enable women workers to not only care for themselves and their families, but also maintain their economic stability.

Often the main family caregivers, women would be significantly empowered should such a program be introduced in Connecticut. For women who become new mothers, paid leave helps their economic situation as well their children's health. According to the National Partnership for Women and Families, in the year following a birth, new mothers who take paid leave are 54 percent more likely to experience wage increases and 39 percent are less likely to need public assistance than those who do not. Fathers who also take a paid leave are also less likely to require public assistance.

Newborns of mothers who take a paid leave of at least 12 weeks are more likely to get better attention and required care, including breastfeeding, medical check-ups and important immunizations. An additional ten weeks of paid leave for new parents can reduce post-neonatal mortality up to 4.5 percent.

Paid leave can also afford a mother the opportunity to be more involved in the hospitalization of a seriously ill child, which could reduce that hospital stay by 31 percent. Active parental care in a child's hospital stay can also stave off future health care needs and costs.

Working women of the "sandwich" generation—women who are faced with caring for elderly parents and in-laws while also caring for dependent children—will be especially vulnerable to needing to take time off from work to care for a family member. According to the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), women represent more than two-thirds of adults providing assistance to elderly parents; supply an annual average of \$1,521 in financial support to elderly parents and spend 23 hours a week, on average, providing care to elderly parents. As the baby boomer generation ages, the demand for elder care will increase and paid leave more important.

While it is clear there are a number of benefits to workers and for those they care, employers have experienced benefits as well. In California, which has had a paid family leave program for nine years, employers surveyed said the program has had either a positive effect or no noticeable effect on turnover (96 percent), employee productivity (89 percent), profitability and performance (91 percent), and morale (99 percent). Further, the majority of employers reported either cost savings or no additional costs associated with implementation.

Empowering women to remain economically stable while they take care of our state's most vulnerable populations—children and the elderly—would not only benefit Connecticut families, but also the state of Connecticut.

We hope you will support this legislation.

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