



**Testimony of  
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Resident of Chester, Connecticut  
Before the Labor & Public Employees Committee  
March 12, 2013**

Good afternoon, Senators Osten and Markley, Representatives Tercyak and Smith, and members of the committee. This is my first time testifying before any committee of the General Assembly, and I am grateful for the opportunity. I'm here to speak in support of **H.B. 6553**, which would create a taskforce to look at establishing a family medical leave insurance benefit plan.

Although I am the communications director of the PCSW, I am speaking today as a private citizen who is, frankly, a "poster child" for why FMLI would be a boon to women and families throughout Connecticut.

My husband and I are the primary caretakers of our elderly mothers, both of whom are 92, and have a variety of physical and cognitive health issues you would expect for women of that age. My mother-in-law lived with us for a year until she broke her hip recently and had to move to an assisted living facility. I have medical Power of Attorney for my own mother, and my husband has medical and financial Power of Attorney, as well as conservatorship, of his mother. In addition, we have a child still living at home, and while he is in good health, he, too, has routine, but time-consuming, medical and dental appointments.

I consider myself extremely fortunate: I have a supportive husband who, because he is a self-employed graphic designer, has the freedom to manage his own schedule. Because of this, he is always there in an emergency, to take his mother to the doctor, troubleshoot faulty hearing aids, refill her medicine, etc. He often does the same for my mother, since I work almost an hour away from home. In addition, since I began working for the State 5 years ago, he has handled virtually all of our son's medical appointments. Without him, I would have had to miss so much work that it, or my family, or I myself, would have suffered noticeably. I should point out that while he has the freedom to rearrange his schedule to accommodate our mothers' needs, it comes at a price; he often works on weekends and into the evening to meet his commitments to his clients.

In addition to him, I have the boss you see before you, who puts her beliefs into practice every day. Teresa understands the enormous family commitments I have, and has made accommodations as necessary and allowable under my job classification. Although it's not a complaint, I have had to use most of my vacation and personal days caring for my mother, moving her recently into an assisted living facility and exercising my responsibilities as medical POA, sometimes several times a week.

So, as I sit her with my enlightened boss, knowing my husband is near my mother should an emergency arise, and assured my son is safe despite the distance between us, I cannot help but think of all the women my age who are not so fortunate: the single mothers, the women who work for MacDonal'd's, the women who do not dare take time off from their service jobs for fear

of retribution, whether covert or explicit. As an executive level State employee with ready access to elected officials like you, I am mindful of all the women who, while they have the right as citizens, do not feel they have the *freedom* – perhaps not even a working automobile – to get up to the Capitol to testify.

So, I respectfully ask that you allow me to speak for them. If those of us who take hundreds of unremunerated hours off each year to take our mothers with dementia to the doctor, to physical therapy after a fall, not to mention stay at home with our kids when they get the flu – if all of us had the means to pay into a plan that would provide a little financial cushion, *all* of our families would benefit. And, I would go so far as to say, from my personal experience, that we would make better workers. Knowing I can make up any missed work over the weekend is a professional luxury not many women have.

I would also like to say a word about taking care of ourselves. Study after study has shown that women tend to put others first when it comes to healthcare. We know this anecdotally; what mother worries about her chronic sciatica when her kid chips a tooth on the playground? And yet, preventive care is absolutely imperative for us to remain strong enough to care for others. As a person who has survived lymphoma and has come through more a few autoimmune disorders, I can honestly tell you that were it not for the fact that I had the time to attend to my own health needs, I would have been useless to anyone else, including the State of Connecticut's General Assembly.

I will always be grateful for this job, and the financial security and peace of mind it offers me when my frail, frightened mother is clinging to my hand while heading to the emergency room, as she did a few months ago. Please consider establishing this task force to see whether it makes financial sense to offer some form of insurance to the millions of women – and the rare men – who shoulder similar burdens of elder, spousal or childcare.

Thank you.