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In Support of HB 5283
Labor and Public Employees Committee
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To Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak, Senator Gerratana, Representative Santiago, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, I am Nicole Seymour, a current graduate student at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work. I am writing to you in support of HB 5283 regarding An Act Concerning Expansion of Family and Medical Leave. I support the bill because of its inclusion of parent-in-law, sibling, grandparent, or grandchild to the list of family members for whom an employee may take leave. This statute will address the realities of many working families in the state dealing with the medical care of a loved one beyond the present Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) family definition.

I believe this legislation is an important first step in expanding FMLA in Connecticut. CT has become a leader in family-friendly workplace policies, such as paid sick leave, which is undoubtedly attracting quality workers to the state. These policies also influence students in my position who will be soon graduating and considering employment opportunities nationwide. These policies are a strong incentive to remain in the state.

Since the enactment of FMLA, the nation has experienced a growth in its elderly population. Presently there are an estimated 486,000 caregivers in the state providing 465 million hours of care.ⁱ The nationwide value of this unpaid care was estimated to be \$5.8 billion value in 2009ⁱⁱ. Due to the aging of the population and workforce, the number of workers with elder-care responsibilities is rising. Additionally, more individuals are providing care that may extend beyond just biological parents. To adapt to the increase of those providing elder-care, an expansion of the legislation is warranted for employees.

I hope that the FMLA policy will be expanded further to Family Medical Leave Insurance (FMLI), which would provide paid leave for employees. Only 13% of

employees used FMLA in 2012. A major deterrent among workers to utilize this policy is due to the unpaid nature of the policy. Benefits of paid leave include: stronger labor force attachment, positive changes in wages, and lower use of public assistance.ⁱⁱⁱ Several states have enacted statutes that have implemented some paid leave for families, including California, Rhode Island, and New Jersey. These protections ensure a worker can temporarily leave their employment to care for a family member or for their own illness^{iv}.

HB 5283 is an important first step in expanding FMLA in Connecticut; however, I hope the Committee will also consider supporting FMLI. I hope the Committee sees the value in supporting HB 5283 as it will strengthen the current legislation to expand the definition of family. Thank you for your consideration.

ⁱ Lynn Feinberg, "What does Research Tell Us About Family Caregiving and Work?" AARP Public Policy Institute, January 16, 2014.

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ⁱⁱⁱ Linda House, Ph.D., "Pay Matters: The Positive Economic Impacts of Paid Family Leave for Families, Businesses, and the Public," Rutgers Center for Women and Work

^{iv} "State Paid Family Leave Insurance Laws". National Partnerships for Women and Families. October 2013.