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Testimony in support of HB 6932: An Act Concerning Paid Family Medical Leave
Labor & Public Employees Committee Public Hearing, March 5th 2015

Good afternoon Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak and honorable members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Arvia Walker and I'm the Community Outreach and Engagement Coordinator for Planned Parenthood of Southern New England. I'm testifying in support of HB 6932 An Act Concerning Paid Family Medical Leave. At Planned Parenthood of Southern New England we see over 65,000 patients at our health centers every year for reproductive health care and family planning services. We also serve young people, organizations, schools and the communities that we are in through our education programs and our public policy and advocacy work. Out of the thousands of faces and people that we meet on a day to day basis it is the stories that drive our work and push us to fight for reproductive justice. As advocates for reproductive justice we must consider all aspects of a woman's life including those that may affect her economic stability.

We hear the stories of mothers who are often times the head of the household. These women are working to provide for their family but in times of emergencies have to make the impossible decision between caring for that same family and having to jeopardize their financial security.

We are here in solidarity with the pregnant mother who doesn't have enough, if any, paid sick days to cover her maternity leave, so instead of staying home and bonding with her new child, she is forced to put her new born baby in an incredibly high cost childcare facility and return to work. We're here in solidarity with Dhanyah...a young black women from Hartford who recently got offered a promotion at her job but unexpectedly her father suffered from an aneurysm and she was forced to choose between the man that raised and nurtured her in her times of need and the job that she wanted and needed.....Dhanyah chose her father; she did not get the promotion.

Connecticut has been a leader in family friendly workplace policies. Let's not stop now. FMLA (The Family Medical Leave Act) was groundbreaking in its time but let's face it, it isn't working for the majority who simply cannot afford to use it. 78% of CT workers who are eligible for FMLA won't take it because they cannot afford to go without the pay. The current lack of paid family and medical leave reduces the chance that a caregiver stays employed at their current job. Women of color are less likely to have access to paid maternity leave, and the odds decrease for all women the younger they are or the less education they have.¹ Those earning the least in our economy—the young, the less educated, and people of color—are also the most likely to have to leave their jobs and to experience a wage-drop after changing employers.⁵ No one should have to choose between their financial security and taking care of themselves or someone that they love.

If passed, Paid Family Leave would provide security for the families who need it most. It would not only strengthen our family units but it would strengthen our workforce. Employees who know that they have security in their job perform at higher levels. In closing, I urge you to support HB 6932 An Act Concerning Paid Family Medical Leave. Let's show Connecticut families that we are supporting them and will continue to promote the health and economic security of all our citizens.

¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns of First-Time Mothers: 1961–2008," (Washington, DC: Department of Commerce, 2011).

⁵ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Highlights of Women's Earnings in 2010 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010), available at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpswom2010.pdf>