

**Testimony for Public Hearing
The Campaign for Paid Family Medical Leave
Raised Bill #6932
March 5, 2015**

My name is Danielle Simoneau, and I have been a resident of Connecticut for twenty five years. I would like to share my personal story, in an attempt to convey the need for paid family and medical leave in Connecticut.

When I was eighteen years old, my father was diagnosed with stage four lung cancer. Upon diagnosis, he was given three months to live without treatment, and six months to one year to live if he opted to undergo both radiation and chemotherapy. Wanting to spend as much time as possible with our family, he chose the latter.

For about eight months, my mother and I took turns bringing my father for various treatments. Being a college student, I would cover weekend appointments, and my mother would drive him on weekdays. My father could not drive himself because the cancer had spread, generating a large tumor in his hip, which caused him to lose the majority of muscle in his right leg.

As a teacher, my mom qualified for the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which is unpaid. In lieu of utilizing FMLA, she instead used all of her personal days to bring my father for adequate care, as the medical treatment was very expensive. Even with the combined medical insurance of both my mother and my father, medical bills were amounting to thousands of dollars. Because my father was very sick, he was no longer working; thus, my mother's income was crucial to sustain the accumulating expenses.

My father passed away at approximately two in the morning on January 12, 2009 at our family home in Killingly, Connecticut. At the time of his death, my mother, having been obligated to financially support the household, was preparing work documents in the other room. She ultimately lost out on closure, as well as time, because she could not afford to take unpaid leave. While it is difficult to put into words the gravity of any great loss, I can say for certain that the financial burdens of my father's illness inhibited the quality and quantity of time that my mother spent with him in his final hours.

With the proposed act for paid family and medical leave, my family's experience would have been grossly different. It would ensure that qualified employees and their families have the appropriate means during times of family and medical need, and, being employee funded, it would not be detrimental to employers. Enacting this will set a precedent for other states that the government should care about the quality of life of its citizens, and it will demonstrate that paid family and medical leave is both relevant and necessary for employees today.

In closing, please consider the impact that paid family and medical leave would have on families like mine. Know that I do not intend to exploit the untimely circumstances of my father's death, but rather hope that legislation will recognize that Connecticut is struggling with the current FMLA, and that

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financial hardship is something that we can prevent when employees are caring for themselves or a loved one.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Danielle M. Simoneau".

Danielle M. Simoneau

Danielson, CT