

**TESTIMONY OF JESSICA LABRENCIS IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 6932: AN ACT  
CONCERNING PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE**

My name is Jessica Labrencis. I am a resident of West Hartford. I appreciate the opportunity to provide this written testimony in support of H.B. 6932: An Act Concerning Paid Family Medical Leave.

Although I grew up in Vernon, Connecticut and recently returned to Connecticut to live in West Hartford, I spent eight years living in California, where my husband was stationed in the U.S. Navy. In 2013, my husband and I welcomed our first child, a baby boy. At that time, I was employed as an attorney at a small law firm in San Diego. My firm was not covered under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, as it employed fewer than 50 employees. Even if my firm had been covered by the FMLA, after the birth of my son I would only have been entitled to up to twelve weeks of *unpaid* leave. As a relatively new attorney at a small law firm with a spouse who was an enlisted sailor, it would have been financially difficult, if not impossible, for me to take off twelve weeks, or even eight weeks, without earning any money. The stress of taking unpaid leave likely would have overshadowed my bonding time with my newborn baby.

Fortunately for my family, however, I was able to take advantage of California's paid family medical leave law. In California, workers pay into the state's family medical leave system, and are able to take up to twelve weeks off after the birth of a child while receiving partial wage replacement. After my son was born, my doctor and I completed a simple form, and shortly thereafter, I began receiving weekly payments which partially replaced my earnings for twelve weeks. During that twelve-week time period, I was able to recover physically and emotionally from childbirth. I was also able to focus on caring for and bonding with our new baby during that

time period, and I believe that having twelve weeks with my baby was crucial in establishing a strong breastfeeding routine with my son.

It was very important to me to return to my job after the birth of my son. After taking off twelve weeks to recover from childbirth and bond with my son, I was able to return to work feeling rejuvenated and grateful for the time off. Thanks to California's paid family leave law, my son's first twelve weeks of life were not overshadowed by financial stress. I urge Connecticut's legislators to pass H.B. 6932 so Connecticut residents can have a similar positive experiences after their birth of their babies or when dealing with other serious health issues. Thank you.