

**Nicole Seymour  
95 Hockanum Blvd, Unit 5108  
Vernon Rockville, CT 06066**

**Testimony of Nicole Seymour, Young Women Rising Steering Committee Member  
In Support of SB 221  
March 8, 2016**

To co-chairs Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. I am writing in support of raised bill SB 221 *An Act Concerning Paid Family Medical Leave*.

Due to the restrictions of the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) (being attached to one full-time job, for businesses over 50 employees, and being unpaid), many employees are ineligible or unable to access it. These restrictions have created an unfair system in which only an estimated 42% of working Americans are able to qualify for FMLA. More alarmingly, businesses have not provided their own work-life balance policies to support employees. If employers are not mandated to provide paid family and medical leave (PFML) it appears as though the majority will not. This is evident by the Bureau of Labor Statistics showing that nationally only 17% of public employees and 11% of private employees have paid family leave.

Besides the inherent injustice in not all individuals having access to PFML, this policy will increase the economic security of all families, particularly low-wage workers. The 2013 American Community Survey reported 18% of families are living in poverty with children under 18. 40% of female-headed households are living in poverty. The financial loss for a worker, if they even qualify for FMLA, who takes the full FMLA permitted 12 weeks of unpaid leave results in an average of \$10,000 in wages. Such an unpaid leave is unimaginable for a family barely making ends meet. If Connecticut invests in PFML, it will spur economic growth by keeping families out of poverty.

For women utilizing PFML after the birth or adoption of a child, they are more likely to return to the same job and to stay employed longer compared to women unable to access such leave policies. Maintaining an attachment to the labor force ensures family economic security. Even if companies offer maternity leave to women this is not available for the non-birth parent. Paternity leave is not a guaranteed right and is a rarity in the workplace. PFML needs to be viewed as a family issue and reflect the importance of all parents providing for their children.

A statewide policy must pass which ensures that all employees have the same rights to access a leave for the birth or adoption of a child, for the care of their own illness, or for the care of a family member's illness. Young women are often sandwiched in between raising their own families and caring for their parents, which is why I ask you to support SB 221. Passing SB 221 will ensure that all young women can rise and thrive in Connecticut. Thank you for your time.