



Over 40 years advocating for the New Haven community.

169 Grand Avenue, New Haven, CT 06513

203.787.0191 www.juntainc.org

March 1st, 2016

Testimony in Support of SB 221

An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave

Dear Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak and members of the Joint Committee on Labor and Public Employees,

My name is Ana María Rivera-Forastieri, I am the Director of Advocacy and Program Development at Junta for Progressive Action—the oldest Latino community based non-profit organization in the City of New Haven. On behalf of our Agency, and the thousands of individuals and their families that we serve each year, we urge you to support SB 221.

Connecticut is nationally recognized for its many victories that have secured workers in the state better wages, better benefits, and better working conditions. We have made strides by passing wage theft protections, paid sick days for certain workers, and increasing the minimum wage. But communities of color continue to suffer at alarming rates. In Connecticut, 24 percent of Hispanics and 18 percent of Blacks live in poverty—a stark difference from the 6 percent of Non-Hispanic Whites that live in poverty.

These statistics showcase the importance of continuing to push for policy changes that will ensure our communities are guaranteed equal opportunities and equal treatment.

Almost every worker in his, her or their lifetime will need to take some period of time off to welcome a new child, to deal with a family illness or even a personal illness. Back in the late 1980s, Connecticut's legislature passed the first Family and Medical Leave in the country which guaranteed some workers the ability to take time off without the fear of losing their jobs. This was an important victory for the movement, but for our community, it was not enough. Not only does the program only apply for employees of firms of 50 or more employees but it does not provide any type of income replacement.

The majority of the individuals that we serve, Latino and Black, work in low-wage jobs. This is important to note because even if unpaid leave is an option, it is simply not a realistic option for our community if workers cannot afford to take an extended period of unpaid time off. The result is a community that is forced to work in inhumane conditions.



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We must find a solution to this problem and come up with a policy that is reflective of our values. We believe that a publicly administered Paid Family and Medical Leave Program is the solution.

Please support this bill.

Sincerely,

Ana María Rivera-Forastieri