



Connecticut State Legislature
Labor and Public Employees Committee
Testimony for Public Hearing – SB 221
An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave
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Thank you Chairmen Gomes and Tercyak and members of the Labor & Public Employees Committee, for the opportunity to speak on behalf of all workers who desire to be both productive employees and responsible family members. The Labor Project for Working Families works with unions and other groups to provide national support to state and local coalitions that aim to pass paid family leave and other work and family policies. We work in partnership with Family Values @ Work, whose testimony has also been submitted. Before I cite the research and other justifications for Paid Family Leave, I'd like to tell you why I wake up each day dedicated to this work.

Until very recently, I was the primary caretaker of my parents. When I left the NYC area and moved to DC, it became clear to me that my parents couldn't live alone. Mom had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and Dad wasn't able to care for her alone. They moved to DC, to a lovely assisted living near my home. I managed and attended all doctor's appointments, was there for every stage of mom's disease, and with the help of amazing staff, nursed my Dad back to health from a bladder cancer illness. I missed work. But I also had access to paid family leave on the job. So I never lost a day of pay. Dad is doing well at 88 years old and we said a tearful farewell to mom in 2014. I was the primary caretaker for 10 years because none of my other 4 siblings had access to paid leave. They would have lost their jobs. I essentially had hit the "boss lottery" and as such my family benefitted.

Our coalition partners in Connecticut have put forth a process and subsequent proposal – SB 221 that will ensure that like me, workers don't have to win the "boss lottery" in order to care for their loved ones. Welcoming a new child, caring for elderly parents or recovering from a serious illness should not result in job loss or financial ruin.

Paid family leave is a work place standard in 179 other countries, many of which permit males to have time to care. As our nation moves slowly toward this standard, states like California, New Jersey and Rhode Island have stepped up. The lessons we've learned from these state initiatives are instructive and the intended consequences associated with these leave laws are numerous.

Paid family leave is good for children. A CNN Study Review showed among other advantages that Paid Family Leave can reduce infant mortality rates by 10%. Newborns of mothers who take paid family leave are more likely to be breastfed, receive regular check-ups and get their immunizations. All indications suggest that paid family leave is good for new babies, giving them a healthy start in life.

We also know that paid family leave strengthens families. I told you my story. My parents' independence was important to their wellbeing but they also needed a loved one close by. A nurse educated me as to my role. She insisted that my partnership with their assisted living and advocacy with their doctors would determine the quality of health care they receive. This advice is proven by research, which links the healing outcomes of hospital patients with the presence of family members and other loved ones. Paid family leave promotes shorter hospital stays, faster recovery and lower healthcare costs.

The California Paid Family Leave law has also taught us that more men are involved in caregiving when they have access to paid family leave. The existence of a law reduces the unfortunate stigma that men have lived with when they choose to care for loved ones. Above all, families need paychecks. We can't tell dads to be more involved with their families if the family will take a serious financial hit as a result of that involvement.

Working people who live close to or below the poverty line, especially the millions who continue to feel the long-lasting sting of our slow recovery, disproportionately bear the brunt of our nation's lackluster family leave laws. And those who need paid family and medical leave most — people of color, single women and low-wage workers — are least likely to have access.

A recent fact sheet published by the [U.S. Women's Bureau on the economic status of women of color](#) shows that almost half (45 percent) of black families and 25 percent of Hispanic families are supported by women heads of household, compared to 12 percent of Asian families and 16 percent of white families. Unpaid leave isn't an option when the sole caretaker is also the sole breadwinner.

As the state of Connecticut considers this important policy, know that you don't go it alone. In addition to the three states mentioned above, more than two dozen jurisdictions have also passed paid leave for municipal employees. And businesses needing to attract and retain talent are making paid leave a basic employment standard. In fact, last year we saw several large companies enact or expand paid leave policies and they do it because it's good for the bottom line.

We applaud the State of Connecticut for, once again, leading the country in legislative action for working families and supporting the Act Concerning Paid Family Leave. My colleague Ellen Bravo provided several examples of the intended consequences of SB 211 in the written testimony she submitted. But more than anything we thank you and with our partners in Connecticut make ourselves available to support your belief that workers can both be both productive employees and caring family members, who are present when their loved ones need them the most.