

**TALKING POINTS OF THE HON. ROSA DELAURO
PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE TESTIMONY
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, 300 CAPITOL AVENUE
TUESDAY, MARCH 8TH, 2016 1:30-2:30PM**

Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak, committee members, it is a pleasure to be with you today to discuss paid family and medical leave.

Let me begin with my personal experience of the value of paid leave. In 1986, I was diagnosed with early-stage ovarian cancer. It was an experience I would not wish on anybody. But in one sense, I was lucky – my employer offered paid medical leave.

In fact, my boss at the time was none other than Senator Chris Dodd, who actually introduced what became the federal Family and Medical Leave Act that same year.

Senator Dodd assured me that my job would be there waiting for me when I returned. With the support of my colleagues and my family, I recovered, went back to work, and have now been cancer-free for 30 years.

Paid leave helped me get through that difficult time in my life. But many families are not nearly as fortunate. Too many working families today are in jobs that do not pay them enough to live on, do not provide paid leave, and leave too many families one crisis away from disaster.

In Connecticut, over 334,924 workers have used FMLA since 1990. But more than half of Connecticut workers do not take FMLA because they do not qualify, are not eligible, or simply cannot afford to take unpaid leave.

For example, I heard from a young mother who works at a community college here in Connecticut. Shortly after she gave birth, her baby suffered a heart attack, and needed a lot of care.

The college was willing to give her paid time off to care for her little girl. But her husband's employer was not so generous. After he burned through what little sick time he had, his workplace refused to allow him any additional paid leave.

Like many young families, they could not afford to lose a paycheck, so this young mother was left with all the burden of caring for her sick newborn virtually alone—all because of an arbitrary difference in workplace policy.

This is not how it should be. Access to paid family and medical leave should be a fundamental right for all workers in Connecticut and across the nation, not a lottery based on where you happen to find work. And yet, just 13 percent of the workforce has paid family leave through their employers.

Connecticut enacted the first family and medical leave protections in the country, and was the first state in the nation to pass paid sick days. Our state should continue to set an example the nation can follow when it comes to policies that work for working families by passing paid family and medical leave.

I am heartened by the legislation that has been introduced here in Connecticut. SB221 would implement a system of paid family and

medical leave in the state. You came very close to passage during the last legislative session.

The new report on Paid Family and Medical Leave [conducted by the Institute for Women's Policy Research required by the Connecticut General Assembly] that came out of last session found that the proposed Connecticut Paid Family Leave program is solvent after a two-year start up period, and that it would only require one-half of one percent of an employee's earnings in order to fund that employee at 100% of wage replacement.

Nationally, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and I introduced the Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act – the FAMILY Act for short. Our legislation would set up an insurance fund within the Social Security Administration. But in the current Congress, we face an uphill battle—which is why it is so crucial that Connecticut enact legislation on the state level.

Paid family and medical leave is an idea whose time has come. It is fair. It is humane. And it is popular. My office received a petition signed

by over 231,000 Americans who support paid family and medical leave, and over 2,000 of them were from Connecticut.

At this point, the reasons for paid leave seem endless. Among businesses that offer the benefit, paid leave has shown to increase employee loyalty and reduce turnover. Leading tech companies including Google, Microsoft and Adobe have recognized these benefits and now offer some form of paid leave.

And there has been proven success with paid family and medical leave in California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island. These states have reported positive economic and health effects—the vast majority of California employers perceive a positive impact on employee productivity, profitability, and performance. In New Jersey, three out of four workers view the program favorably. And in Rhode Island, where business supporters were critical to the passage of the law, early indications show the program working well.

An analysis of states with paid family and medical leave showed that these programs reduce the number of families on public assistance.

Women in these states were less likely to receive public assistance or food stamp income following a child's birth.

Families who work hard deserve our support to get through tough periods in their lives. Helping them keep their jobs and hang on to their paychecks will boost our economy. There really is no reason not to enact paid family and medical leave.

With this bill, we can correct this injustice in Connecticut, and make sure that a long-term illness no longer threatens the economic security of working families. Thank you.