



Testimony for SB 221, An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave
Labor Committee
March 8, 2016

Hello Co-Chairs Gomes and Tercyak and distinguished members of the Labor Committee,

My name is Isa Mujahid. I am a New Haven resident, the Founder and Lead Community Organizer of CT-CORE and Organize Now! and most importantly, I am the proud father of 2 of the smartest, most beautiful young girls on the planet, if I do say so myself. My eldest is 6 years old and my youngest is just a year.

Around this time last year, when my youngest was just a few months old, I had the honor of sharing my story, as the father of a newborn about the important role paid family leave played for me and my family. Present during one of those conversations, was the Deputy Director of the Federal Department of Labor, Tom Perez, who was looking to Connecticut to lead the country on this issue - as we have done so many time before with our own version of FMLA and Paid Sick Days.

You will hear testimony today about how very important it is for parents to spend those first few months with their newborns, if they are able to. I was fortunate to be able to take paid time off through my employer at the time. Some parents will stagger their leave to maximize the time that at least one parent will be home with their baby. My wife and were home at the same time.

In addition to spending quality time with and caring for our child, being home on leave allowed me to support and in many ways care for my wife, who had just performed one the most amazing feats I've ever had the privilege to witness - bringing a new life into this world.

If that wasn't enough, after spending 20 hours in labor, I watched her nourish and care for our daughter, averaging just a few hours of sleep each night for weeks and weeks. Needless to say, I was in awe of her strength, fortitude and ability to do things I can't imagine. It was important for me to be there for her while she was there for our child - to feed her, as she nursed our daughter, to step in while my wife dozed off while holding our child in her arms, to allow her to get a few minutes sleep before our baby girl was crying out for mom once again.

When our older daughter would return home from a school, at an hour when I would normally be at work, I was able to be there for her also - to help her adjust to the new family situation, to remind her that even though mom is very tired right now, you're still our big girl and "Hey. By the way, let's get out of mom's hair right now and go do something really fun (whatever that may be)."

To be honest, our newborn wasn't much interested in Dad in those early months. We didn't bond. She was all about Mom, the woman who gave and sustained her life. But I knew one day, once she got to know me, she would think that I was pretty cool too. Sure enough, one year later, I'm one of her 3 favorite people (including her mom and big sister).

Some of the testimony today is from people who have had to make impossible decisions between providing for and caring for their families. These stories alone are reason enough to pass this law. These are decisions none of us should have to make.

Those of us who, so far have not been in these impossible situations, can still share with you, how passage SB 221 can support and help families thrive. Thank you for the opportunity to share my story. Please pass Senate Bill 221, An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave.

Thank you,

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