

March 8, 2016

Dear members of the Labor Committee,

My name is Jeanne Lamp, and I am writing to urge you to vote in favor of SB 221 to establish a paid family and medical leave program.

I am a preschool teacher two years away from retirement. I am paid hourly, and I receive five paid vacation days of my choosing annually and five paid days in August when the school closes for a week. I also receive two paid sick days and one personal day annually, but I do not have paid family and medical leave.

When my mother had heart surgery several years ago, my husband had a good job, and I could afford to work a part-time job so that I could take care of my school-age children. When I took time off, it didn't put a dent in our financial situation, but husband lost his job in 2008 and is now working as a store clerk for little over minimum wage.

Now my mother is 89 years old and has a chronic lung condition. She gets pneumonia several times per year, but because she lives in Florida, I can't afford to take time off to take care of her. We live paycheck to paycheck with nothing left over, and we don't have anything to fall back on. I can't afford to retire, and we've already gone through all our savings. I don't have the resources to take care of my mother when something happens to her. I will use whatever vacation days I have during the year, but if I had paid family and medical leave, I would be able to take care of her for more than eight days without taking a financial hit or using the paid sick days I need for myself.

Life's been tough, but having to choose to use my paid days off between myself and my mother makes it even harder. Working with young children - who often sneeze and cough in my face and leave germs everywhere - I often get sick.

But I can't afford to take time off to stay home and get well, even if I have a fever. So I go into work sick and, yes, spread even more germs. I probably go through 4-6 pairs of rubber gloves to keep the children from catching the illness and make them use separate soap from me. I'm also diabetic, so I use my two sick days for doctor visits. If I had paid family and medical leave and more paid sick days, I could use my paid days off for myself instead of saving them for my mother, and we wouldn't have as many sick children.

I believe everyone is entitled to a good living wage with paid family and medical leave for birth, childcare, preventative care, and times of dire need. I urge you to support SB 221 and establish a paid family and medical leave program in Connecticut.

Thank you,

Jeanne Lamp