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My name is Joanna Wilson and I am an Australian citizen. I am a newly permanent resident of the United States by marriage and a new mother. Paid Family Leave Program would have given me more opportunity to find work, become a tax-paying member of society and less of a burden on the health and welfare systems despite being pregnant as a new immigrant.

I entered the United States as a fiancée with intent to marry my now husband. Once married in December 2013, we set about the process of changing my immigration status from a temporary fiancée to that of a married permanent resident with a "greencard". We became pregnant soon after; but the greencard and work authorization process takes an indefinite period of time depending on a myriad of factors. My authorization to work finally came in May 2014 but by then I was already 5 months' pregnant. I have a Bachelor's degree and 12 years' food management experience from my home country -- but who is going to employ a pregnant immigrant with a watermelon-sized belly?

The Affordable Healthcare Act (AHA) and the Connecticut health exchange had only just rolled out a month previously in April 2014. Even after that became available, how were we going to afford quality Ob-gyn and hospital care for the birth on only one income? The immigration process for the US has strict income levels for sponsors, and makes it clear that federal financial assistance is not available to fiancée applicants nor greencard holders. Should immigrants require federal assistance they have to repay it thereafter. It was luck that we found a medical office with sliding-scale fees whilst I remained unemployed and not covered by the AHA for the first half of my pregnancy.

Immigration paperwork comes with its own delays. But if Paid Family Medical Leave was in place, I would have had more opportunity to seek employment as soon as I got my work authorization no matter my pregnancy. Both my employer and myself would have more peace of mind knowing that once trained, I would be returning to the same job post-partum. An employer would have less turnover of employees, I would have more job security, and as a pregnant immigrant I would then be able to afford health insurance for myself and the baby, making me less of a burden to the Connecticut health and social services system. Immigrants would be less likely seek "cash in hand" employment and contribute to Connecticut taxes through legitimate employment.

I sustained a second degree tear from the birth. I was in pain with limits on my range of motion for about a month afterwards. In addition to stitches, at 8 weeks old our baby had some feeding issues which turned out to be an allergy to cow milk protein. This required a special diet for the baby and would take up a further 6 weeks to resolve. A 12 week maternity leave period to establish the health of newborn infants would have covered most of this time.