

Testimony of Kim Cerullo

3/8/2015

Testimony in Favor of SB 221: An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave

Dear Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak, and the members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee,

I am writing today to indicate my full support for SB 221, An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave. I strongly believe that a system of paid family leave for the state would help families and caregivers to take care of their family members, save on medical costs, and return to the workforce more productive than they might otherwise be.

I have seen the benefits of paid leave first hand this year. My mother and father both live in Massachusetts, but I believe our story transcends state borders. My father is chronically ill. For many years, he has lived with bronchiectasis, a degenerative lung disease that causes the lungs to scar over, compromising the immune system and leading to multiple week-long hospital visits every year. The only cure for this disease was a lung transplant, which he received in November 2015 after years of waiting.

We're very thankful for his recovery. However, during this trying time, my mother and I had to drop everything for three months and take care of him. My mother was lucky enough that she was able to make arrangements for paid leave with her employer during this time. Our family has benefited immensely as a result. With a steady source of income we are able to pay bills, including my tuition, without burning through our life savings. As my father's healthcare proxy, my mother was able to be present and consult with doctors to make the best decisions possible regarding his care. Since she has not been working, we have been able to split caretaking duties between the two of us, without paying for an at-home aid.

Finally, if my mother was unable to take leave during this trying time, we would have had to make some major changes. I would have been forced to leave school, or even move back to Massachusetts, in order to be my father's full-time caregiver. My mother may have resorted to retiring early, harming us financially while driving up recruitment and training costs for her employer.

My family was able to create a paid leave arrangement through an employer when we needed it most. I am thankful for this, and so is the rest of my family. I can stay in school. My father can recover in the comfort of the family home. My mother can return to the workplace in the future, worry-free, and continue doing what she loves and what she is good at. Our family should not be the exception to the rule. Paid family leave should be a standard for all families. It is a difficult budget year. However, the financial, emotional, and health benefits of paid leave far outweigh the costs. I urge you to consider assisting families just like mine, who exist and struggle all across the state of Connecticut, by passing SB 221.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Kim Cerullo, from Wethersfield Connecticut