



Permanent Commission
on the Status of Women in Connecticut

**Testimony of Susan Eastwood, Board Member,
Permanent Commission on the Status of Women in Connecticut
Before the Connecticut General Assembly
Joint Committee on Labor and Public Employees
February 16, 2017**

**In Support of SB 1 and HB 6212 AN ACT CREATING A PAID FAMILY
AND MEDICAL LEAVE SYSTEM IN THE STATE
And
HB 5591 AN ACT CONCERNING PAY EQUITY IN THE WORKFORCE**

Dear Senator Gomes, Senator Miner, Representative Porter and honorable members
of the Labor and Public Employees Committee,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Susan Eastwood; I am a Board member on the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women in Connecticut, and a resident of Ashford. I am testifying in support of **SB 1 and HB 6212 AN ACT CREATING A PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE SYSTEM IN THE STATE.**

SB 1 and HB 6212 will establish a paid family and medical leave system in Connecticut. I strongly support this legislation to provide support for workers who need to take time off from work in order to care for themselves or a loved one. Connecticut families should not be subjected to additional stress at times of crisis or driven to choose between economic ruin and caring for their families in times of illness.

My husband Tony and I have two children, who are now grown. When our son Aidan was born, we were able to both take 6 weeks of maternity/paternity leave, sequentially, in order to bond with our son and begin to learn our new roles as parents. This was even more important because I had an emergency C-section which saved our son's life, and I needed recovery time. We appreciated that we were able

to take the time off without fear of losing our jobs due to the federal Family and Medical Leave Act [FMLA]; however, we did have to take the leave without pay. It was a hardship but was well worthwhile.

When our daughter was born, we were no longer in a position to afford for my husband to take time off his job because I was not employed, having chosen to be home with my young family. Far from our extended families, this was a difficult time for us, and paid family leave would have been a great help.

Years later, on Thanksgiving Day, I received a distressed call from my mother in Wisconsin. My father, who was suffering from dementia, had had a medical crisis and I was needed to fly out to help right away. We were fortunate to be able to respond to the crisis without too much financial difficulty, but these examples gave me a deep empathy with families who have less fiscal margin and would have to make the heartbreaking choice of losing the salaries they depend on and caring for themselves or a loved one in time of need.

Most of us have our own stories like this, or know others who have been affected even more deeply. That most likely explains why there is such strong support for paid family medical leave in Connecticut; a 2016 AARP poll found 83% of CT voters supported PFML. Nationally, the concept enjoys bipartisan support.

Other states in our region, including NY, NJ and RI, have already passed bills similar to these. Massachusetts is likely to follow suit soon. The additional benefit to workers is likely to be a draw for attracting talented employees, and businesses which see the advantages of having employees who stay with them, have higher morale and greater productivity, as has been shown to be the case in CA businesses. A recent report by the McKinsey Global Institute documents these benefits:

“In 2002, California became the first US state to mandate parental leave, a scheme funded through a 1.2 percent payroll deduction. Ninety-one percent of companies said that this scheme had either affected them neutrally or boosted profits (Applebaum and Milkman, 2011)...

After Google increased paid maternity leave in 2007 from 12 to 18 weeks (and increased paid paternity leave from seven to 12 weeks), it achieved a 50 percent reduction in the rate at which new mothers left the company.”¹

I urge you to support **SB 1** and **HB 6212** and work to ensure passage this session. Connecticut's families deserve the security of having paid family and medical leave when life throws them a curve.

I would also like to add my support for **HB 5591 AN ACT CONCERNING PAY EQUITY IN THE WORKFORCE**. If I may, I would refer you to my testimony on behalf of the PCSW on **H.B. 5210, An Act Concerning Various Pay Equity and Fairness Matters**, at your Public Hearing of January 31, 2017. I also submitted three reports on pay equity which are relevant to HB 5591 as well.

The McKinsey report I referenced shows how paid family leave and other factors can contribute to gender pay equity in many ways that you may also want to consider. [<http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/employment-and-growth/the-power-of-parity-advancing-womens-equality-in-the-united-states>]

Thank you for your time and attention.

¹ 2016, "The Power of Parity: Advancing Women's Equality in the United States", Kweilin Ellingrud, Kweilin, Anu Madgavkar, James Manyika, Jonathan Woetzel, Vivian Riefberg, Mekala Krishnan, and Mili Seoni, McKinsey Research Institute, <http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/employment-and-growth/the-power-of-parity-advancing-womens-equality-in-the-united-states>, p 8.