Dear Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly: My name is Peg Oliveira and I am the Executive Director of the Gesell Institute of Child Development, a non-profit early childhood research and professional development organization that has worked nationally from our headquarters in New Haven, Connecticut, for over 65 years to promote the principles of child development as the basis for all decision making for young children.

I am submitting comments in support of S.B. 1 and H.B. 6212: An Act Creating a Paid Family and Medical Leave System in the State. These bills will create and implement a comprehensive, statewide system of paid family and medical leave for workers needing to take time off to care for themselves or a loved one. We would like the committee to consider the following:

A Paid Family and Medical Leave System is good for kids.
Paid parental leave can reduce infant mortality by as much as 10%, according to a 2011 study1 of 141 countries with paid leave policies. It also increases the likelihood of infants getting well-baby care visits and vaccinations, with one study2 finding that children were 25.3% and 22.2% more likely to get their measles and polio vaccines, respectively, when their mother had access to paid maternity leave. Without paid leave, there was no increase in immunizations.

Paid parental leave can also increase the rate and duration of breast-feeding. A 2011 study in California3 found that women who had paid leave breast-fed twice as long as women who did not take leave. Babies who are breast-fed, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, are less likely to get a variety of infections and are also at lower risk for asthma, obesity and sudden infant death syndrome. There are benefits to mothers, too, as women who breast-feed are less likely to get breast cancer, ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes and heart disease, according to the CDC.

A Paid Family and Medical Leave System is good for the economy.
Research has found it benefits women economically because they tend to go back to work and stay with the same employer, which means their wages grow at a faster rate afterward. There are also savings when it comes to turnover and training costs for businesses.


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In an effort to maintain momentum toward a true early care and education system birth to age eight, that reflects current research and practice and best serves children and families, we recommend a Paid Family and Medical Leave System that is:

1. AFFORDABLE for CT workers and businesses. We recommend a system publicly administered through the CT DOL and funded by small employee deductions of 0.5% of weekly earnings. Workers would receive 100% of their weekly earnings, up to a cap of $1,000.

2. ACCESSIBLE for all CT workers who need to take all kinds of leave (medical, parental and caregiving) in all kinds of families. The Campaign recommends legislation that expands the definition of family to include siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, and chosen family members.

3. ADEQUATE and provides enough time for family care or healing. We recommend a program that offers a minimum of 12 weeks of leave.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony regarding S.B. 1 and H.G. 6212.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or need additional information.

I can be reached at peg@gesellinstitute.org or (203)777-3481.