

# Labor and Public Employees Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5003

**Title:** AN ACT IMPLEMENTING A PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE PROGRAM

**Vote Date:** 2/19/2019

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 2/14/2019

**File No.:** 22

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor and Public Employees Committee.

### REASONS FOR BILL:

Connecticut currently has no paid family and medical leave system.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

**Tina Courpas, Executive Director Permanent Commission on the Status of Women:**

Long-established social insurance programs that provide the backbone to the societal safety net were created on the premise that each worker in his/her productive working life is also in part funds that portion of their lives when they cannot be so productively engaged. This bill does fundamentally the same. The burden to pay falls substantially equally across all workers to cover a risk which applies substantially equally to all possible beneficiaries. The things covered by this plan could occur anytime in a workers life, just as old age. They do suggest the bill include considerations to provide an adequate 'cushion' is accumulated during any phase-in period to ensure the program is fully-funded, solvent and self-sustaining. Also, they think outsourcing the administrative requirements in whole or part would ensure the program is run as cost-effectively as possible.

### NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

**Sen. Martin M. Looney, President Pro Tempore,**

**Sen. Bob Duff, Majority Leader, Senators Mary Daugherty Abrams, Dennis Bradley,**

**Christine Cohen, Mae Flexer, Will Haskell, Julie Kushner, Matt Lesser, Doug McCrory,**

**Marilyn Moore, Cathy Osten and Gary Winfield:** Passage of this bill will protect our workers, make us more competitive with our neighboring states, improve economic justice

and allow individuals to take time off when needed to recover from an illness or care for a family member. This economic security is important for economic security during stressful life events. Businesses benefit by increasing worker loyalty, dedication to the employer and productivity while allowing competition with businesses in surrounding states.

**Representative Caroline Simmons, 144<sup>th</sup> Assembly District:** CT is struggling financially because of sluggish economic growth and low workforce participation. Rep. Simmons submitted statistics supporting a key method to expanding the economy by advancing policies that support women in the workplace. Postpartum recovery, essential to the emotional and physical health of mother and baby, can take from 6 weeks - 12 weeks or more. Pregnancies and deliveries are unpredictable and can have issues/complications. Boosting labor participation among women requires advancing family- friendly policies during reproductive years. This will improve health outcomes for women and newborn babies and benefit our economy as well.

**Sen. Mae Flexer, Deputy President Pro Tempore, State of CT:** In 2013, Sen. Flexer voted to establish a study on how to best implement Paid Family and Medical Leave. She has watched surrounding states surpass our leadership and establish programs of their own. At some point in our lives, nearly all of us will need time away from work to recover from a serious illness or to care for a sick loved one or new baby. No CT worker should be forced to choose between the families they love and the job they need. We much catch up to our neighbors and provide a portable, accessible and publically run system.

**Representative Gary Turco, 27<sup>th</sup> Assembly District:** CT must be more competitive in reversing the current 'brain drain' because of youth leaving the state. Our state desperately needs to fill in areas that require educated and talented workers. The business communities will greatly be served by these additional workforce pool assets.

**Luke A. Bronin, Mayor, Hartford,CT:** The United States is the only developed country in the world with no national law to provide paid family leave. A fair system of paid leave is good for employees and business. In California, a study found that 91% of employers said the policy either boosted profits or had no effect. Very few working families in Hartford are able to take advantage of family leave and sometimes must choose between caring for a family member with a serious illness and earning a paycheck for food for their children. This bill allows these families some relief without burdening their employers or the State.

**AARP, Connecticut:** Their testimony supported this bill as a commonsense plan completely funded by employees who would contribute and have access to a limited amount of paid time off to offset lost income while recovering from a serious medical emergency or caring for a loved one. It would offer employees security and eliminate the fear of losing their job or paychecks.

**American Property Casualty Insurance Association:** Their testimony urges construction of a program which would take advantage of the experience and expertise of private companies who have been providing popular, successful and efficient leave programs across the nation. Public/private partnerships benefit the state and employees/ employers.

**Stephen Anderson, President, CSEA Local 2001:** He testified when a worker or loved one has a health crisis or a new child is born/adopted into a family, far too many low-income

workers are forced to take unpaid leave or exit the workforce entirely. This bill would increase paid leave and cover more workers for longer periods of time.

**Lisa Andrews, Director of Public Policy/Communications, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV):** She cited research proving the benefits of paid family leave systems. CT's current FMLA provisions are for UNPAID leave and only for companies with 50+ employees. Survivors of domestic violence would have a meaningful source of support and have time to address many physical and mental health conditions resulting from abuse. Often these workers are the sole earner supporting children. This bill would include the benefits of a stronger work force, positive changes in wages and a lower use of public assistance.

**Beth Angel, Self, East Hampton Resident:** She said that nearby states (RI, NY and NJ) have implemented successful paid leave plans that have proven worker retention, and avoid expensive turnover costs and retraining. Many employees are not eligible or just can't afford to take unpaid leave and need their paychecks. CT should stay competitive in our region and attract and retain employees. And join VT, NH and ME who now have pending legislation for paid medical leave.

**Dr. JoAnn Bauer, Self/Working Families, Hartford Resident:** She said this bill would create a more just and equal playing field. She said surrounding states with similar policies have a clear economic advantage over CT.

**Janet Bellamy, Occupational Therapist, Visiting Nurses and Health Services of CT:** She gave personal first-hand experience of having to care for her elderly parents. People coming back from illness, surgery, hospitalization from a fall or a chronic illness generally need 24/7 care before returning to their prior level of functioning. Since funded by small contributions of approximately .5% of weekly earnings by employees, it would not hurt businesses and would help CT stay competitive with other states.

**Monica J. Belyea, MPH, RD, Middletown Resident:** She testified that CT is surrounded on all sides by states that have already enacted paid leave and if she were starting her career now, she would look for work in one of those areas. The majority of caregivers are women who contribute to the gender wage gap and black women who already bear the burden of high rates of maternal life-threatening illnesses and have no financial security.

**Beverly Brakeman, Region 9A Director, UAW:** Too many workers are either ineligible or can't afford to lose pay when the need for medical leave becomes a reality. No one should be worried about their income or job loss. Only 17% of workers, including only 6% of low-wage workers, have access to paid leave through their employer. This bill should be passed to attract and retain workers in CT.

**Sarah Bromley, Early Childhood Educator, Milford, Resident:** The components she feels most important are the 12-week coverage within a 12-month period, coverage for all employees, 100% wage replacement up to \$1,000/week, the inclusive definition of family and that the program should be publicly administered. It works for surrounding states and can work for CT, too.

**Dr. Gerald Calnen, Pediatric Physician (retired) Enfield Resident:** He told of a family who had identical premature twins born with severe complications requiring countless highly complex medical appointments. In the beginning of his career, he most likely wouldn't have to care for them because they wouldn't have survived. We are victims of our own success! Many children with histories of multitude medical challenges are now surviving into adulthood and require much attention. It is estimated that 1 in 5 kids fit into the category of 'children with special health care needs.' These families need the support offered by this bill. It is the right thing to do.

**Lynn Campbell, Executive Director, Office for Catholic Social Justice Ministry, Archdiocese of Hartford:** The family is a central social institution that must be supported and strengthened. How it is organized directly affects human dignity, which is the foundation of a moral vision for society. The family unit would be strengthened and the common good of society enhanced by this family leave plan.

**Marijane Carey, Maternal and Child Health Consultant, CT Coalition, Hamden, CT:** This bill would have an immediate and long-term impact. Families would not become economically compromised or financially stressed while tending to someone with a health care condition. As far as children's health goes, it would mean lower infant and child mortality, higher birth weight, multiple health benefits due to increased breastfeeding duration and completed immunizations as well as parent-infant bonding. Mother's would have a lower rate of depression, fewer depressive postpartum symptoms and more complete physical recovery. This bill is not only good for families; it is good for business as well.

**John L. Cattelan, Executive Director, Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs:** Although they are not opposed to the implication of a paid family medical leave bill, they are concerned about the burdens this could place on non-profit organizations. They suggest changes aligning the weekly payment with the current unemployment payment, adding a requirement that all employees must take their paid sick time and vacation time before applying for paid family medical leave, consider only allowing paid family leave for an immediate family member, opt out a provision for employees that don't want to participate, requiring an employee to work 12 months and work 1,000 hours before they are eligible to participate and require paid family leave be taken concurrently and only be allowed 12 weeks of leave during a 2-year period.

**Crystal Champeau, Self:** Crystal told of her struggles with post-partum depression and bonding with her new-born daughter after giving birth. She and her husband are homeowners who both work very hard to meet their financial responsibilities. Unpaid leave was not an option even though they pay into many programs for which they are ineligible! People should not have to choose between their own family health and the job they need and enjoy.

**Oswaldo Chin, Self, Danbury Resident:** He said the lack of paid leave disproportionately impacts workers of color who are overrepresented in low-wage jobs that don't provide paid leave. There are racial wealth and wage gaps where workers have fewer resources to absorb the financial impact of a family or a personal medical issue. Most workers cannot afford to miss a pay check so they can't take advantage of unpaid leave.

**Alberto Cifuentes, Jr., Board Member, GLSEN CT :** LGBTQ youth often develop chosen family at an early age if they are rejected or face abuse from their biological family. Paid family leave is essential for economic and racial justice since this group is overrepresented in

low-wage jobs that don't provide paid leave. Due to racial wealth and wage gaps, workers of color, especially LGBTQ people, have fewer resources to absorb the negative financial effects of a family or personal medical issue.

**Jessica Ciparelli, Self, South Windsor Resident:** She spoke of the traumatic events surrounding the loss of her mother after an extended illness. No one should have to choose between caring for a sick parent, caring for a new baby/child or taking care of their own health and their job. FMLA doesn't work for most families, many who just aren't eligible (just 17% with only 6% of those being low-wage workers) or unable to afford unpaid time off provided by the federal act.

**Emily Coffey, MSW Student, UConn Hartford School of Social Work:** He testified as party of her field placement for CT. Association for Human Services. She said families must juggle between employment and family responsibilities in the United States as compared to 183 other countries who have family paid leave in place. Passing a progressive paid leave system in CT would support workers and families.

**Patrick Commerford, Self, New Haven Resident:** After coming out as queer, he was unsure of how his biological family would react. His primary relationships were strained or broken and he was left without the support and safety network families provide. This creates the necessity of creating a chosen family for care and the situation is common in the LGBTQ community. Family conflict is one of the most common reasons for youth homelessness and this group is disproportionately represented because of who they are. Many people are already living on the margins and will continue to be forced to choose between their jobs and caring for their families - biological or chosen.

**Mary Consoli, RN, BSN, Danbury Resident:** As a member of the Danbury Nurses' Union, she personally was able to care for her family when required and was able to return to her exact position with no loss of benefit time. This opportunity is not available to a worker who does not belong to a union. If CT is to remain competitive in the job market and attract and retain workers, they need to pass legislation similar to that of surrounding States. When workers are out due to an illness themselves or to care for other family member for any length of time, they may have to resort to public assistance which is not cost efficient for the State.

**Sarah Croucher, Executive Director, NARAL Pro-Choice CT:** She said many low-wage workers are limited to have children because of the financial burdens due to the lack of access to paid family and medical leave. With the current FMLA programs, families must have at least some form of savings to allow them to cover expenses while taking leave. Many don't even have access to paid vacation days to use to take just a few days or weeks of paid leave after the birth of a child. They urge an inclusive definition of family and feel the bill should be accessible to all, regardless of income level or family structure.

**Patience Crozier, Senior Staff Attorney, GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders:** This legislation is of particular importance to the substantial LGBTQ community. Of the 3.9% identifying in this group, 20% are raising children. They face food insecurity at a higher rate than the non-LGBTQ community and research has shown they are more likely to live in poverty than their counterparts. Broadening definitions of family members protects LGBTQ families. Family relationships arise through non-marital partnerships, birth, assisted

reproduction, gestational carrier agreements, legal guardianship and conduct. All workers should be recognized by the reality of today's diverse family and family structures.

**Brian C. Cutler, Associate Appeals Referee, Mystic Resident:** In his work as Treasurer of AFSCME, Local 269 and in the Labor Department, he has seen countless individuals forced to quit their jobs in order to take care of ill family members or help during the birth of a child. Unfortunately, they can't receive unemployment compensation benefits because they are unable to meet the availability requirement and have nowhere to go for financial help. This bill benefits the employers because they won't have expensive turnover costs and helps workers so they won't fall behind on bills and medical expenses which could force them into bankruptcy.

**Shellye Davis, President, Eastern CT Area Labor Federation and Greater Hartford Central Labor Coalition:** Shellye's full time job is a paraeducator at Moylan Expeditionary Learning Academy and she typically does not work enough hours each year to be eligible for leave under the federal FMLA. This bill recognizes the extremely important work paraprofessionals perform in schools through our state. Since these jobs are on the low end of the pay scale, paraeducators generally can't afford to take unpaid time off. This bill would move CT forward and align us with surrounding states already providing paid medical leave.

**Brenna Doyle, Self, Vernon Resident:** She noted that relying on private industry to 'do the right thing' regarding paid leave just doesn't work. It is not realistic to hope employers offer sufficient leave when employees need it. Just 17% of workers, including only 6% of low-wage workers, have access through their employer. It is time for the government to step up.

**Susan Eastwood, Board Member, Permanent Commission on the Status of Women:** 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. Ms. Eastwood told of situations in her own family where FMLA was helpful, but says that others should not have to make the heartbreaking choices of losing the salaries they depend on and caring for themselves or loved ones. She said employers are likely to draw young talented employees and businesses have the advantage of having employees stay longer with the companies, have higher morale and greater productivity.

**Nancy J. Fabrizi-Miller, Public School Teacher, Wallingford Resident:** She told of her experiences during the extended illness of her husband while serving as his care-giver at home until he passed away in 2006. She was fortunate to be able to care for him and their teenage daughter, but few people are in this position and still able to keep their jobs, not to mention maintain their own health and have some peace of mind. Sometimes it turns out to be the last time they spend with a loved one.

**Kate Farrar, Executive Director, CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF):** Her testimony shared the story of her mother-in-law and the experiences of leaving Vietnam after the war to bring her children to the US for a better life. She had personally cared for several family members, and was now receiving in-home hospice herself. Ms. Farrar feels a need to be with her now since she and her husband accept the end is near. The rest of the world sees the common sense and significant economic and social value of paid family medical leave. The USA remains one of only two countries in the world without it.

Everyone, no matter what their job, financial circumstances or chosen family, should have access to this program.

**Lindsay Farrell, State Director, Working Families Party of CT:** CT's economy is not working for too many workers, whether black, brown or white. Pay is unjustifiably low and workers are insecure. Women and workers of color are hit especially hard by policy gaps and unfair practices of many employers. There is strong awareness of these problems at the grassroots level, and for many people, these are matters of life and death. Principles that should be included are: No worker left behind, paid family and medical leave when needed, a comprehensive program that works and is financially sustainable, and avoiding partial solutions that only help a handful of workers. She testified that corporate tax credits don't help, flex and health savings accounts leave the most vulnerable behind and leaving it to the market hasn't worked.

**Carol Ann Feldmann, AARP Volunteer, West Hartford:** Ms. Feldman told of managing her disabled sister and mother which had an impact on her family and financial stability. Caregiving is a 24/7 job which is stressful, unrelenting and overwhelming. When forced to take extended periods of unpaid leave, she worried about job security and making ends meet. This bill would go a long way to relieve the anxiety of caregivers.

**Dr. Jordana Frost, Public Health Professional, Storrs Mansfield resident:** One of the few certainties in life is not a question of IF we will need time to care for ourselves or loved ones, but rather WHEN we will need this time. Paid Family and Medical Leave will be an important tool in our efforts to collaboratively build a competitive, prosperous, healthy and equitable Connecticut. Employers benefit with decreased employee turnover, increased productivity and by encouraging employees to return to work. Employees benefit because it allows them to access their earned benefit regardless of potential job changes (portability feature). CT's economic health and racial justice are at stake. Lack of paid leave disproportionately impacts workers of color who are overrepresented in low-wage jobs. She urges support of this bill.

**Sally Grossman, Small Business Owner & Windsor Resident:** She, just as most small business owners, doesn't get paid if she doesn't work. She was ill throughout her pregnancy and couldn't afford to take time off. After going into pre-term labor, she spent three days in the hospital and doctors successfully stopped contractions, but she was placed on bed rest for the remaining 9 weeks of her pregnancy. This meant 9 weeks without income. After a C-section delivery, she was told to wait six weeks before returning to work but she went back after only three. She was forced to go on WIC assistance so she could provide formula and diapers for her baby. It took years to recover from this financial hardship. With surrounding state enacting PFML programs, CT can't afford not to pass this legislation.

**Mary Lee Kiernan, President/CEO, YWCA, Greenwich:** A pressing issue for employees is their ability to take a leave in order to care for themselves, child or parent for an extended period of time with some level of economic security. This need increases for women of color. Employers know this system will encourage employees to remain with their employer instead of leaving permanently, increase job satisfaction, improve workplace culture and enhance productivity. It will cut cost of training replacement employees. Start-up costs will be

substantial and they suggest considering outsourcing some IT work and/ or finding out whether certain IT infrastructure could be bonded over three years with payback of the bonds built into the premiums charged to the employees. They also recommend premiums be collected for a period of time before payouts to claimants begin, insuring the financial viability of the system and impact on the State's operating budget.

**Tim Gabriele, North Haven Resident:** . His first child was born in Pennsylvania when new parents were not assured their jobs would be held for them upon returning to work. When they moved to CT, his union membership (Local 32, New Haven) allowed him paid leave to bond with his new child and develop an early nurturing relationship without fear. Our laws seem to be designed for a different time when parents/grandparents or nearby family were able to pitch in when necessary, but now many people work well past retirement age. Paid leave should not only be for the privileged or powerful, but for anyone in need.

**Alice Garlock, Milford Resident:** Sarah searched for 6 months just to find the right doctor to perform top surgery. After finding one, she had to postpone the surgery because her mom, who would be her caregiver after surgery, didn't have scheduled time off from work until April. A best friend's mom was willing to take time off because she is a chosen family member so the Chosen Family section is very important. DNA doesn't determine family anymore.

**Michelle Marone-Pillsbury, Program Director, Susan B. Anthony Project:** This bill gives family member access to care for the survivor while obtaining treatment for and recovering from a serious health condition. The physical and mental toll of domestic violence cannot be overstated. Although CT has explicit employment leave for victims of family violence, it is not required this leave be paid, and limited to 12 days per calendar year. Lack of paid leave disproportionately impacts workers of color who are overrepresented in low-wage jobs that don't provide paid leave and have fewer resources to absorb the financial impact.

**Annastasia Martineau, Willimantic Resident:** As someone who identifies within the LGBTQ community, she knows her future family will not look like a 'typical' heterosexual nuclear one. As yet, she doesn't know who in her family will be there to support her and her family when the time comes as well as what kind of familial support her future partner will have. She relies on a wonderful chosen family support network. It is necessary not only to pass paid family and medical leave but to pass a version with an inclusive definition of family that includes extended and chosen family members.

**Robin McHaelen, Executive Director, True Colors, Inc:** A lesbian herself, she has worked on behalf of LGBTQ youth and families for more than 25 years. Many constituents create a chosen family because of rejection by their families of origin. Older members are nearly twice as likely to live alone and depend on these close friends in emergencies. This bill is economically appropriate and the right thing to do. Families matter – even (maybe even especially) when your family is your closest friend.

**Keely McMullin, Fairfield Resident:** Federal paid family leave doesn't just support growing families but ALL families facing medical crisis. She told of her own experience with her son who was diagnosed with Type One Diabetes at 13 months of age. FMLA does not do

enough because the majority of workers are either ineligible or can't afford to take unpaid leave. Just 17% of workers, including 6% of low-wage workers, have access to this benefit. CT must stabilize families facing financial crisis due to illnesses.

**Rick Melita, Director, CT State Council , Service Employees International Union:**

Unfortunately we live in an era of late stage capitalism where corporation needs and owners of capital trump basic human needs to care for family members. We see the effects of an economic system with historic income inequality, scapegoating, and even shorter life expectancies. This bill will be denounced as bad for business. Mr. Melita admits this would place additional requirements on business owners to be more flexible /humane/understanding and to care more about workers. This is a small trade off to make CT a better place to work and live.

**Katrina Mill, Mother of two:** She suffered a year of postpartum recovery and said we are putting both mom and baby at risk without paid family leave. Returning to work too early doesn't allow new mothers to build up a milk supply or bond properly with their babies.

**Carlos Moreno, State Director, Working Families Organization of CT:** For years, the WFO delivered ample research based testimony substantiating the need for paid family and medical leave. He considered purchasing a short-term disability plan when moving to a new job, but found there were no accessible/ affordable plans that provided the level of coverage that met the needs of his family. It should not be left up to the generosity of an employer to determine which employees deserve paid leave or the level of coverage they deserve. This is unfair to people of color, low income earners and the working poor. It is time to give the majority of CT's workforce a better chance at achieving financial security and prosperity.

**Danielle Morfi, North Haven Resident:** She was affected by the lack of paid leave in CT 3 times, once when her dad was terminally ill and twice when there were complications after giving birth. The fact that we play "Russian roulette" with our health is disturbing and unacceptable. People across the state have gone bankrupt over medical crises that are emotionally and physically traumatic, and devastating to their financial stability for years to come. This bill stops the vicious cycle of punishing working –class people for having children, getting sick or caring for sick loved ones.

**Erika Mott, Manchester Resident:** Erika spoke of her mother who has worked two jobs most of her life and since taking time off would mean not getting paid. She ignored injuries or illness just to keep working. Not having paid leave makes workers fall behind on paying bills and therefore are likely to file for bankruptcy. One unfortunate incident could leave them with large medical bills they are unable to pay.

**Michele Murdick, Legislative Advocate, CT Conference, United Church of Christ:** Her testimony on behalf of 233 congregations and 67,000 people said that 78% of eligible workers won't take advantage of FMLA because they can't afford to lose pay. Many employers don't meet the size requirements. When employees have access to this leave, they are happier and more productive.

**Barbara F. Munck, AARP Volunteer, North Haven Resident:** Most of us have been or will be a family caregiver or find themselves in need of help for a loved one to live independently.

Family caregivers are the first line of assistance for most people with disabilities to remain at home and live with dignity and independence. CT caregivers provide 427 million hours of unpaid care per year. This is worth an estimated \$5.93 billion annually.

**Michelle Noehren, Colchester Resident:** Her sister has multiple chronic illnesses that flair up unexpectedly. Even though she requires time to rest and get doctor's help, it is difficult because she faces income loss. Many chronically ill people are talented and want to work, but need some time off now and then to tend to their needs. A system of paid family leave that includes full job protection makes sense for our economy, the work force and our families.

**Kathy Null, AARP Volunteer, Bridgewater Resident:** The business work place has dramatically changed for adult children. So-called personal time is more limited and adult children find themselves under pressure to keep a job and help a loved one. Providing this need assures family members get the right help and assures them it is working properly. It will save money with less people going into expensive nursing homes, eventually needing state aid. It will ease pressure on working caregivers who will become better employees in the long run.

**Denitra Pearson, Home Care Worker, SEIU Healthcare:** Passing paid family medical leave allows new mothers the needed time to care for their child in its earliest days. It is unfair for workers to choose between working to pay their bills or staying home and building a relationship with their new born child. This bill would help countless parents.

**Norman Pelouquin, Canterbury Resident:** He and his wife have been caring for his wife's 3 developmentally disabled siblings, all in their 70s, since 1984 UNPAID! She had cancer and went through chemo and radiation, had a breast removed, and eventually had a LINKS procedure because the radiation damage didn't allow the surgery wound to close. He was the only wage earner in this household. He should have been better able to care for her, but they needed his paycheck to survive.

**Jonathan Perlow, Cos Cob Resident:** His testimony was about his own experience when his daughter was born 3 ½ months premature. After she spent 4 months in the hospital, he was granted a full month paid leave to care for his wife and daughter. He was able to be there when his family needed him and was grateful to be able to do so. The generosity and compassion of his employer increased his loyalty to the company and he stayed there for 22 years. With states around us adopting PFML, this program removes an incentive for people to leave the CT for better insurance coverage. His testimony gave results of several surveys/researches supporting PFML.

**Conor Pfeifer, Triangle Community Center, (Fairfield County's LGBTQ Community Center):** He supports this bill because the language is inclusive and supports LGBTQ and families. Chosen families can develop early out of necessity for some people who face extreme stigma within their biological families and communities. The LGBTQ community is underemployed, and more likely to experience economic stressors. They are more susceptible to bankruptcy. Any legislation passed must have an inclusive definition of chosen family. Not everybody can count on blood relatives for care.

**Austin Pope, Middletown Resident:** Paid leave is a positive step for racial justice and gender equality. Women will return to the workforce more easily and face less discrimination in hiring. It would support Black and Hispanic women who are often heads of households and overrepresented in low-wage jobs. This will not solve all economic and racial inequalities, but will have a measurable impact.

**Kristen Powers, Political Action Liaison, Local 5051 AFTCT Healthcare:** Without paid leave, medical issues are negatively compounded since many people now live pay-check to pay-check. This bill dramatically improves the quality of life for anyone needing medical leave. Every working person is included, even the self-employed. Disability insurance is seriously expensive and unaffordable. CT needs to stay competitive to attract and keep employees.

**Cindy Praisner, Early Childhood Coordinator, Colchester Resident:** Research shows disadvantaged families are least likely to have the economic and social resources to provide the early developmental experiences every child needs. If CT is serious about reducing the achievement gap and wealth disparity, PFML is a necessity. Let's provide all children equal opportunities for a great start by enacting PFML.

**Philp Prata, Small Business Owner, State General (Insurance) Agent:** As a small business owner, it is important to recruit and retain sales representatives and employees. The insurance industry is demanding, which is why they are union, founded on the idea that working Americans should be paid fairly, have well provided benefits and an opportunity to grow. This bill implements a comprehensive, statewide system for workers who need to take time off.

**Ann Pratt, Director of Organizing, CT Citizen Action Group:** The absence of paid family and medical leave disproportionately impacts communities of color and further exacerbates CT's racial wealth and wage gaps. This bill will make a critical difference. The evidence is clear: paid family and medical leave benefits workers, families and our economy.

**Cheri Quickmire, Executive Director, Como Cause in CT:** She believes much time spent talking about how we need to be friendly as a state, attract young people and encourage them to stay to work and raise families. Paid Family and Medical Leave is a long time coming and should be passed as soon as possible.

**Sarah A. Raskin, Professor, Trinity College, West Hartford Resident:** As a neuropsychologist, she works with people who have brain injuries and other neurological disorders. She has seen countless families in desperate situations because they can't take time off to care for injured loved ones. Given the gaps in our health care system, much of the daily routine care falls on the family. With shorter hospital stays, families only have a few weeks after an injury to learn everything they need to care for their loved one. We are living longer. More people will be alive who require significant care. Caregivers must have the opportunity to take time when a crisis occurs. This is a bipartisan issue that has the support of the majority of voters in the state.

**Emily Rodewald, Simsbury Resident:** Three years ago, her family moved her grandparents, ages 86 and 87, from California to CT to care for them. Her mother, the main provider, works for a small business owner for hourly pay. Numerous times, she had to miss

work to care for her parents. Her employer understands, but she still doesn't get paid for time she missed. This bill would alleviate the stress and worry running through this family.

**Ann Rodwell-Lawton, Legislative Liaison/Director of Education & Training, Women's Center of Greater Danbury:**

For survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, this bill provides a meaningful source of support. Survivors who have chosen to leave an abusive partner now may be the sole earner supporting their children. Stable wages are critical for them to obtain life's basic needs during a time of healing and recovery after experiencing trauma.

**Kit Salazar-Smith, Waterbury Resident:**

Without Paid Family and Medical Leave, employees will send children to school or go to work while sick, spreading their illness to others around them. Sometimes food is rationed and hungry children can't concentrate on lessons. Medical needs are neglected when money is needed to pay a heating bill. Proper clothing isn't provided so families lack warm seasonal clothing. Studies show PFML employees are more productive and loyal because they feel valued. Training new employees costs more than retaining loyal, expert employees so this bill is good for CT businesses.

**Angela Schingheyde, Director of Civil Legal and Court Advocacy Services, The Center for Family Justice:**

Despite research showing the benefits of a paid family leave system, the United States is one of the few developed countries without one. The physical and mental toll of domestic violence cannot be overstated and the support of a loved one when dealing with the aftermath can strengthen outcomes and stability for survivors and their children. Implementing true paid leave is an essential component of supporting economic and racial justice.

**Kaitlyn Shake, Nurse, Startford, Resident:**

Kaitlyn told of her experiences in caring for her mother when she became critically ill. She was running between her job and the hospital during the illness and long recovery period. They are still managing her complications but she is recovering. CT families can't afford to wait. She urges passage of this bill.

**Jeff Shaw, Senior Director of Public Policy & Advocacy, The Alliance:**

They applaud the intent of the bill, but have concerns they ask to be included in the final legislation. To implement successfully, contract amounts for nonprofits that provide community services on behalf of the State must be adjusted to build in protections and ensure resources are available to cover increased cost, such as funding vacancies and temporary workers at a sustainable rate. Staff is already lean at many health and human service organizations that require minimum staffing levels for challenging populations needing 24-hour care and support. It is nearly impossible for current employees to absorb the responsibilities of employees on leave. Finding qualified and experienced temporary employees could prove difficult and costly. Nonprofits can only afford to hold vacancies and positions to the extent that the state contracts pay. If increases are not implemented, few programs and people receiving services will result.

**Rachel Silbermann, Ph.D, Fiscal Policy Fellow, CT Voices for Children:**

They support this bill because it is self-sustaining and will not add to state costs, it enables parents to spend crucial time for healthy growth/development of infants and newly adopted children, promotes economic stability for families, and provides protections to workers in all families, not just those related by blood or marriage.

**Karianne Silverman, MD, Obstetrician and Gynecologist, St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center, West Hartford Resident:**

Dr. Silverman said she has watched countless pregnant women at the end of their third trimester struggling to continue working up until the onset of labor because they have no financial choice. These same women make the difficult choice to return to work far too early due to financial pressure. It is time for CT to protect young families with paid family and medical leave.

**Kristianna Smith, New Britain Resident:** A series of health/life events made 2018 a wake-up call for her family with a surgery, a birth and an emergency hospital stay which proved that lives are short and time with our loved ones is precious. All people, not just the wealthy, must be allowed to spend time with family members during emergencies. Maternity leave should not be a right for only middle-class workers. If this bill doesn't pass, you are denying the citizens of CT the ability to care for their family members/loved ones in their most vulnerable hours. In CT, this translates to predominately white families. The role of government is to do collectively what we cannot accomplish individually.

**Stacy Stableford, AARP Volunteer, Trumbull Resident:** Stacy told of the financial setback she encountered during both her father's and mother's illnesses. Her credit card debt skyrocketed and her small savings account disappeared and by the end of her dad's life, she was 30K in debt. If she had PFML, she would have been in debt for a fraction of that amount and it would have been easier to financially recovery. Newborns, adoptions, illness and cancer, accidents or old age will touch every one of us at some point in our working lives. Let's finally get this bill passed.

**Sun Life Financial, Disability Insurers:** They respectfully suggest the legislation give employers the opportunity to provide these statutorily required benefits through either the state program or a private plan. Private plan options vary in design but some of the plusses include more generous benefits, employee and employer experiences so they can choose a private plan rather than participate in a state program, and assistance with claims administration. They submitted written testimony with facts on private plan options.

**Todd Szoka, Owner, Sunshine Cycle and Run (store), Colchester Resident:** As a small business owner with 3 employees, he strongly believes no one should lose their job or go without pay because of an unforeseen circumstance or caregiving responsibilities. However, he can't afford to pay someone who isn't there once their allocation of paid time off has been used. The proposed paid leave bill would give his employees the time off to deal with caregiving responsibilities without causing them financial hardship.

**Lisa Thomas, Coventry Resident:** Lisa's testimony told of her experiences when her husband needed emergency open heart surgery. There were months of rehab and recovery. Strong employment contracts meant they had the reassurance and privilege of being protected from losing their jobs and income during this time. The majority of working families are either ineligible or can't afford to take unpaid leave provided by the federal FMLA. This is unacceptable, especially since many worked hard during elections for economic and racial justice. Lack of paid leave disproportionately impacts workers of color who are overrepresented in low-wage jobs. Racial wealth and wage gaps mean many working people have fewer resources to absorb the financial impact of a family or personal medical issue.

**Dominique Torok, Special Projects Manager, CT Alliance for Retired Americans:**

Despite working more hours and having less time off than people in any other advanced nations, many workers can't make ends meet. It is a situation that puts families into crisis. This bill would help ensure CT's working families have choice and not left voiceless. They would be able to remain financially stable in what is often a challenging emotional time. For the sake of our elders, children and grandchildren, they urge support for this bill.

**Katherine Villeda, Leader/Facilitator, CT Students for a Dream:** She cited several incidents in her family where PFML would have proved beneficial. The social norm of the "nuclear family" is outdated. It takes a village to care for one another and oftentimes we find ourselves taking care or being cared for by someone who may not be immediate family or even blood related. For some, chosen family is the only family. She supports the inclusive definition of family in the legislation and feels this would move the state in the right direction to reduce economic disparities and racial injustice.

**Arvia Walker, MSW, Public Policy and Strategic Engagement Specialist, Planned Parenthood:** Economic security is one of the main contributing factors in reducing health disparities. Her organization seeks to assure true reproductive freedom by giving every person the resources needed to live as they choose, plan families, raise children free of barriers, and live free of oppression. Reproductive oppression is controlling /exploiting individuals through, sexuality, labor, and reproduction. Losing income and financial stability is an active example. PFML is a human rights issue that will have a critical impact.

**Karlene Whonder, Personal Care Attendant, Member of SEIU, District 1199:** This bill is about respect and dignity. Karlene told of her emotion/financial ordeal while caring for her husband after he was diagnosed with prostate cancer. When forced to leave his job, she was supporting herself, husband, son and 96-year old mother-in-law on a weekly PCA salary of \$228.75/week. He returned to work as a math tutor before reaching full recovery causing further complications. If they had access to PFML he would have been able to heal properly. No one else should have to endure this.

**Stephen Wierbicki, Associate Appeals Referee, CT Dept. of Labor:** He told the benefits of being free of worry during a time when he had to take time off to care for his dying mother. His wife will give birth to their first child in May, 2019, and he will be able to provide help in caring for her and their newborn child. Paid PFML keeps workers employed and prevents employers from incurring the cost of constant hiring and unnecessary turnovers.

**Carol J. Williams, Ph.D., Co-Chair, Community Foundation of Eastern CT:** This bill is especially important to working women who are the most likely to need paid family and medical leave because they bear children, are more likely to be caretakers of seriously ill family members and are likely to work part-time jobs with no access to benefits. It costs the state nothing but will bring tremendous benefits to low-wage women employees and their families.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Suzanne Bates, Senior Policy Fellow, Yankee Institute for Public Policy:** She expressed concerns that if the program became insolvent, additional tax increases would

occur without any vote by the legislature. This already has been seen with the enormous cost to state taxpayers when a defined benefit program was underfunded. This is another mandate on employers as well as a new payroll tax on employees and the result will mean fewer jobs and fewer residents to fill them.

**Dr. Candace R. Benyei, Whimsy Brook Farm and Animal Hospital, Westport, CT:** Dr. Benyei's testimony said CT has a history of behaving as if businesses are somehow bad and should be punished, support the entire State, and have unlimited funds to do so. She spoke as the owner of two small businesses, (a farm and an animal hospital), and said there is a limit as to what someone can afford to pay to fix a sick dog or cat. If CT really wants to shut down and drive out the remaining businesses that have not left yet, passing this legislation, along with the \$15/hr. minimum wage, should accomplish this.

**Association of CT. Homecare Agencies:** Their testimony cited negative effects this bill imposes on employers and the economy including: a pay reduction of at least .5% even if they don't use the benefit; employers being required to continue to pay non-wage costs for those using the program such as unemployment compensation, health insurance etc; taxpayers will pay for the projected \$13 million in startup cost and \$18 million administering ongoing costs; and employers will have to bear the cost of hiring replacement workers. Among other suggestions, they recommend consideration of a 60-70% wage replacement rate similar to other states and adding stronger provisions that discourage fraud.

**CT School Transportation Association:** In written testimony, they said CT is currently experiencing a serious shortage of school bus drivers mostly due to the length of time it takes to process an application because of the tremendous backlog. COSTA does not believe they should be included in any paid family medical leave law since they are essentially part-time, seasonal workers who work only 180 days/year. They request that school bus drivers be exempted from any paid family medical leave legislation.

**CT. Spa & Pool Association:** Their testimony said the vast majority of their member companies are small independent family businesses with 1- 4 employees. This bill would force them to make critical decisions to hiring their staff and ultimately negate CT's economic growth on the grass roots level. As a seasonal industry, working about 7 months a year, they can't afford to have staff absent for 12 weeks a year which is nearly half of their production season.

**Jonathan Edwards, Owner, Jonathan Edwards Winery, Stonington:** As it currently stands, this bill is too broad, rigid and costly and CT is in no place financially to implement this type of legislation. It would serve to worsen the state's fiscal health, cripple the wellbeing of small businesses across the state and further affect our taxpayers. OFA projects start-up costs could go up to \$20 million and cost \$500,000 annually in loans as well as funding to pay back. As it is, we already have the highest debt service of all 50 states. He urges rejection of the bill.

**Janine Fay, President/CEO, VNA Healthcare & Hospice:** The first concern is the added administrative costs. They will need to track FMLA in two ways, going between the current benefit structure and this new plan. A majority of employees receive pay during FMLA through use of accrued sick/vacation time. This new program will require differentiating which pay they are under. Also, they will have to maintain non-wage benefits such as Workers'

Compensation, health and short term disability insurance. Since the majority of services are paid for by federal or state government, they are not able to simply charge more for service to offset these increased costs. The incentive aspect is also costly. They encourage reducing the 100% wage replacement proposal and hope a compromise can be discussed so small employers are not once again burdened with additional costs.

**Elizabeth Gara, Executive Director, Council of Small Towns, (COST):** CT's towns and cities continue to face serious budget challenges, given reductions in municipal aid and limited growth. As property taxes increase, housing values decline. Collective bargaining could potentially be negotiated and cause increased costs to small towns already overburdened. Focusing on strengthening our local economies rather than adding another unfunded mandate should be the goal.

**Merrill Gay, Executive Director, CT Early Childhood Alliance:** An infant's healthy early development depends on having time to bond and form strong relationships with parents and caregivers. Paid family leave should not be a privilege available only to high-income families, since children born into poverty are most in need of consistent nurturing adult caregiving relationships. Too often new parents miss critical bonding time because they are forced to return to work out of economic necessity.

**Eric George, President, Insurance Association of CT:** His testimony said State benefits would be no threat to solvency since 8 – 12 % of employers choose the private market. If there is no affirmative decision by the employer to choose the private market, it would default to the State program. Employers would have reduced administrative burdens and costs. Private sector development and more sophisticated technology would be encouraged. For employees, they would have more generous benefits, no or low cost, faster processing of medical claims, more user-friendly technology and they could have benefits paid directly through payroll. And finally, employers would benefit because benefits may be used concurrently and would avoid a large number of federally mandated leave programs that present a potential administrative nightmare.

**Bill Hillman, Bethel Resident:** This is just another tax added to increased sales tax, income tax and toll tax. It will make CT unaffordable and motivate people to move to other states, taking their small businesses with them. It is insane to add a .5% tax that can be increased in a way that requires a supermajority or 60% to reject.

**Wayne Pesce, President, CT Food Association:** CT's proposal is grossly inflated compared to neighboring states. Massachusetts allows eligible participants 40% on medical reimbursements vs. 100% and only includes organizations with more than 25 employees vs. only 5 in this bill. All CFA Member Companies already offer a host of disability benefit options and this legislation would impact the flexibility of these benefits. It is an extremely high expenditure for business. OFA projects a cost of \$18.6 million annually to manage. This law would necessitate hiring potentially hundreds of new state employees to administer the program with a \$13.6 M startup cost. They urge rejection of the bill.

**Wendy Traub, Chairman, CT NFIB Leadership Council, Small Business Owner:** People start their own businesses for many reasons; some have a passion for something, others know they possess special skills/talents to offer a product they create or perhaps they

like the thought of being independent or creating jobs. This proposed plan doesn't take into consideration many important issues for small business owners-employees who require special education, training or certifications to fulfill their jobs. Consider vet technicians, IT people, manufacturing equipment operators, drivers with CDL licenses, licensed plumbers and electricians to name just a few. When there are only 3 or 4 employees, many have specific skills that can't easily be traded or substituted. They have no human resource departments to request short-term replacements. It is no coincidence that the majority of businesses in support of the bill are retail or service industry related, where special licensing, education or training is not an issue and other employees can 'pick up the slack' for a period of time. This bill claims no cost to employers but this is not true. A dentist must reschedule months of appointments with the loss of a dental hygienist; an electrician can't complete a housing project deadline; or a machine shop that must shutdown because they can't find someone certified to do the job because they know they will be laid off in three months or less. Owners have a unique relationship with their employees and therefore want the ability to work with them to determine the best combination of benefits such as vacation or personal days. CT is stifling the success of small business owners. This group asks that these concerns be addressed before a vote is taken: Consider making anticipation only be mandatory for employers with 50 or more employees. Consider the undue financial/physical effect for many small business owners. Consider the future potential of the employer contribution to the plan where most of these businesses have small profit margins. Including anyone "whose close association with employee is the equivalent of a family member" opens the door to allow inconsistent and unlimited approval of leave for virtually anyone, making it even more difficult to maintain a full staff. Keeping these concerns in mind, it is their request that small businesses be exempt from the PFMLP.

**Reported by: Marie Knudsen**

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