



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Testimony in Support of

SB 1, AAC Paid Family and Medical Leave SB 765, AA Ensuring Fair and Equal Pay for Equal Work HB 5003, AA Implementing a Paid Family Medical Leave Program

Member Organizations

The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services
Ansonia, CT

The Center for Family Justice
Bridgeport, CT

Women's Center
Danbury, CT

Domestic Violence Program
United Services
Dayville, CT

Network Against Domestic Abuse
Enfield, CT

Domestic Abuse Services
Greenwich YWCA
Greenwich, CT

Interval House
Hartford, CT

Chrysalis Domestic Violence Services
Meriden, CT

New Horizons
Middletown, CT

Pridence Crandall Center
New Britain, CT

The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services
New Haven, CT

Safe Futures
New London, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Norwalk, CT

Women's Support Services
Sharon, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Stamford, CT

Susan B. Anthony Project
Torrington, CT

Safe Haven
Waterbury, CT

Domestic Violence Program
United Services
Willimantic, CT

Labor and Public Employees Committee February 14, 2019

Good afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and members of the committee. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those who serve them. Our 18 member organizations provide essential services to nearly 40,000 victims of domestic violence each year. Services provided include 24-hour crisis response, emergency shelter, safety planning, counseling, support groups and court advocacy.

Paid Family and Medical Leave

We urge your support of SB 1 and HB 5003, which will create and implement a comprehensive, statewide, self-funded system of paid family and medical leave for workers needing to take time off to care for themselves or a loved one.

Despite research showing that the benefits of a paid family leave system include a stronger work force, positive changes in wages, and lower use of public assistance, the U.S. is one of few developed countries without such a system. The federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) simply does not work for many families. FMLA only provides for UNPAID leave and is only required of companies with 50 or more employees. Most workers who are eligible for this type of leave don't use it because they can't afford to lose pay. Only 17% of workers in the U.S., including just 6% of low wage workers, have access to paid leave through their employer.

For survivors of domestic violence, SB 1 and HB 5003 would provide a meaningful source of support. Both proposals would allow a survivor to take time off to address the many serious physical and mental health conditions that result from abuse while still getting paid and able to support their family. This can be particularly important for survivors who have chosen to leave and now may be the sole earner supporting their children.

Also critical for many survivors is the provision under both bills that allows family members to access paid leave to care for the survivor while she or he is obtaining treatment for and recovering from a serious health condition. 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.

Connecticut does have explicit employment leave for victims of family violence (CGS § 31-51ss); however, it is not required that it be paid and it is limited to 12 days per calendar year. This time may not be sufficient for an employee to address her or his own serious health condition resulting from domestic violence and the existing law does not include any provision that would allow a family member leave time to care for the survivor.

Connecticut is a leader on family-friendly workplace policies, but when it comes to paid family and medical leave, we are trailing behind many of our neighbors. Connecticut is now surrounded by states that have passed paid leave including

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Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Rhode Island. Similar legislation is pending in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. Connecticut must adopt paid leave to stay competitive in our region and attract and retain skilled workers.

Implementing true paid leave is an essential component of supporting economic and racial justice in our state. Lack of paid leave disproportionately impacts workers of color, who are overrepresented in low-wage jobs that do not provide paid leave and, due to racial wealth and wage gaps, have fewer resources to absorb the financial impact of a family or personal medical issue. According to the Centers for Disease Control, women of color (American Indian/Alaska Native, Black, and Multi-racial) experience the highest rates of intimate partner violence when compared to other races and ethnicities (*NISVS: 2010 – 2012 State Report, CDC*). Access to paid leave would significantly improve outcomes for these survivors.

Paid leave will benefit Connecticut's economy and businesses. Without paid leave, workers fall behind on bills and medical expenses, and are more likely to file for bankruptcy, which negatively impacts the economy. Further, when workers don't have access to paid leave, they are more likely to ultimately need to leave that place of employment. Paid leave improves worker retention and saves employers' expensive turnover costs. After 10 years of paid leave in California, employers overwhelmingly report positive or neutral impact on their businesses and employees report increased morale and productivity.

SB 1 and HB 5003 meet each of the Campaign for Paid Family Leave's core values and proposes a strong, comprehensive paid family and medical leave program that:

1. Is publicly administered through Connecticut's Department of Labor (DOL)
2. Provides high wage replacement and job protection for all workers
3. Expands FMLA's definition of family to include chosen family
4. Covers family and medical leave
5. Is portable to the employee and is based on earnings, not hours worked

It's time for Connecticut to adopt a paid family and medical leave system. We urge your support of SB 1 and HB 5003.

Fair & Equal Pay for Equal Work

We urge your support of 765, which could have a meaningful impact on the safety and independence of survivors of domestic violence.

While economic insecurity and poverty are not the cause of domestic violence, the intersection of these challenges can create added barriers for survivors. Survivors who are facing economic insecurity or poverty have greater difficulty accessing vital resources such as affordable housing, employment opportunities, and legal assistance. Abusive relationships can also force survivors out of educational opportunities and stable employment. These compounding effects of domestic violence and economic insecurity create barriers for survivors seeking independence and safety.

Many victims of domestic violence also have to contend with financial abuse. It is estimated that financial abuse is present in 98% of abusive relationships. It is a form of domestic violence that seeks to render the victim solely dependent on the abuser. There are generally three categories of financial abuse: preventing the victim from acquiring resources, preventing the victim from using resources, or exploiting the victim's resources. Many victims do not (or are not permitted to) have gainful employment. Inadequate finances leave victims lacking autonomy and confidence that they have the economic stability to be on their own.

The safety of domestic violence survivors is directly linked to their ability to achieve economic security. The majority of victims of intimate partner violence are women who only stand to benefit from policies that increase women's economic security. Ensuring fair and equal pay for equal work will strengthen the opportunity for many survivors to achieve economic security.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

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