

Testimony of Monica Belyea, MPH, RD in support of S.B. 1: AAC Paid Family and Medical Leave and H.B. 5003: AAC Implementing a Paid Family and Medical Leave Program. February 14, 2019

Dear Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and members of Labor and Public Employees Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today in support of *S.B. 1: An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave* and *H.B. 5003: An Act Implementing a Paid Family and Medical Leave Program*. My name is Monica Belyea, I am a constituent of Senator Lesser's from Middletown and have been a Public Health Professional living and working in CT since 1995.

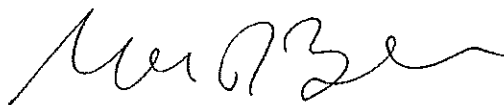
Paid Family and Medical leave is good for workers, families and employers. You already know that the United States is one of the only countries in the world that offers no paid leave, zero weeks, to care for a new baby, an aging parent, or a sick family member. When I was pregnant with my second daughter I opted to leave my job and take on consulting work so that I could work fewer hours and be home to bond with my new baby. I'm lucky that I have a partner with job security and we were able to cut back and make ends meet. But the ramifications of that decision on our long term financial situation are real. We'll be fine because we have generational wealth passed down from our parents and their parents. Many families don't have options and must return to work before they are ready or fall into debt when they need to take time off for caregiving.

The vast majority of caregivers are women, the need to take time off for caregiving is one of the major contributors to the gender wage gap. Going back to work two weeks after your baby is born is exhausting, physically and emotionally. And for Black women who already bear the burden of high rates of maternal death, it can be life threatening. It is also challenging for the newborn infant. During the first six months of an infant's life she develops secure attachments, learning to trust that her needs will be met, developing communication skills and starting to learn how to regulate her states. This time period is crucial in the development of obesity as well. When one child has many caregivers and changing routines it is more difficult for her to do her job as an infant. Paid family leave makes sense and it's time.

We are surrounded on all sides by states that have enacted Paid Leave. If I were starting my career now, I'd be looking for work in one of those states. Experience from these states and other countries around the world shows that paid leave, as public policy, works to improve health and financial outcomes.

I strongly support S.B. 1. I hope the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers will vote favorably this year to make paid family and medical leave a reality for all Connecticut workers.

Thank you for your time,



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