

Anderson, Bryan

From: mjcarey95@aol.com
Sent: Thursday, February 14, 2019 7:52 AM
To: LABTestimony
Subject: Testimony on S.B. 1 and H.B. 5003

Dear Members of Labor and Public Employees Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Marijane Carey. I live in Hamden, Connecticut and am a Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Consultant who manages the Connecticut MCH Coalition. This testimony is on behalf of the MCH Coalition, which is a representative group of health care providers, human service organizations and advocates working in concert with the state's maternal and child health population. The Coalition has over 195 members representing more than 78 organizations. We support 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.

S.B. 1 will create and implement a comprehensive, statewide system of paid family and medical leave for workers who need to take time off to care for themselves or a loved one or welcome a new child.

The public health goal of maternal and child health is to improve the well-being of women in their child bearing years, pregnant women, mothers, fathers, infants and children. This goal is often used a predictor of the health status of future generations and can help to identify future public health challenges for children, their families, the communities in which they live and the health care delivery system.

Therefore, the provision of paid family leave has both an immediate and long-term impact on the health and well-being of Connecticut's children and their families. Paid family leave is essential for ensuring that families are not economically compromised or financially stressed while taking time after a birth or an adoption to bond and care for their new infant or child; are dealing with an infant in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU); a hospitalized child or partner; or tending to a family member with a chronic health condition.

A brief produced by the National Center for Children in Poverty [1] lists the following benefits on children's health resulting from paid family leave: lower infant and child mortality; higher birth weight; multiple health benefits due to increase in breastfeeding duration; more well-baby doctors' visits; complete immunizations; better parent-infant bonding; and better parental care for children with special health needs.

The health benefits for mothers cited in the brief are: lower rates of depression; fewer depressive symptoms postpartum; more complete physical recovery from childbirth; and greater physical and emotional well-being from longer periods of breastfeeding.

From a family perspective, the brief identifies the following benefits of paid family leave: more time spent by fathers caring for and bonding with the child; greater job retention; and greater economic security.

Paid family leave is an important vehicle for addressing health equity. Access to paid parental leave is critical to the health of Black women, who face much higher rates of maternal mortality and complications from pregnancy. Lack of paid leave disproportionately impacts workers of color, who are over represented in low-paying 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.

Paid family leave is not only good for families, it is good for business. When workers do not have access to paid leave, they are more likely to leave their jobs. 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 business. Paid leave increased morale and productivity among California employees.

Rhode Island, New York and New Jersey have passed and implemented successful paid leave programs. Massachusetts passed paid leave in July 2018. Similar legislation is pending in Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. We must pass paid leave to stay competitive in our region and attract and retain workers in Connecticut.

I urge the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers to support S.B. 1 and H.B. 5003 this session. Paid family leave addresses health equity, a public health priority; contributes to the health and well-being of Connecticut's families; and keeps the state economically competitive.

Thank you.

Marijane Carey, MCH Consultant on behalf of the CT
MCH Coalition
Via Carey Consulting

Reference

1. National Center for Children in Poverty, Paid Family Leave, Strengthening Families and Our Future. Available from http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_1059.pdf.