



February 15, 2019

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

My name is Alberto Cifuentes, Jr., LMSW, and I am from West Haven. I am a board member of and certified Professional Development (PD) Facilitator for GLSEN Connecticut, an accredited chapter of GLSEN, the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

On behalf of myself and the GLSEN Connecticut Board of Directors, we stand in firm support of H.B. 5003: An Act Implementing a Paid Family Medical Leave Program and S.B. 1: An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave. In alignment with our organizational values of equity, justice, and diversity, we affirm that an inclusive and expanded definition of family in the paid family medical leave program protects the lives of LGBTQ youth and their families.

All families, including LGBTQ youth and parents, should be included in the paid family medical leave system. LGBTQ youth often develop chosen family at an early age if they are rejected or face abuse from their biological family. If LGBTQ people are unable to care for their chosen family during periods of illness, this can intensify the effects of trauma and abuse experienced during youth. In addition, if LGBTQ individuals, both married and unmarried, are not allowed to care for their loved ones simply because they cannot afford it, their family members may not receive the proper medical attention and treatment they deserve.

Secondly, paid family and medical leave is essential to our organizational pillars of economic and racial justice. Lack of paid leave disproportionately impacts people of color, who are overrepresented in low-wage jobs that do not provide paid leave. Due to racial wealth and wage gaps, workers of color, especially LGBTQ people of color, have fewer resources to absorb the negative financial effects of a family or personal medical issue. In addition, access to paid parental leave is critical to the health of women of color, who face much higher rates of maternal mortality and complications from pregnancy.

Lastly, our chapter is composed entirely of volunteers from diverse walks of life, many of them LGBTQ or allies. One of our volunteers is the mother of a married lesbian daughter who needed to take extended time off to care for her premature identical twin baby girls as well as recover from a difficult childbirth. Even though she needed to be on bedrest for several weeks per her doctor, she was not paid for the missed time from work and could barely afford to provide for herself and her family while she was recuperating from a life-threatening pregnancy. Providing paid leave to all employees would guarantee that people like our volunteer's daughter are allowed to recoup from physical illnesses without added stress and anxiety that could exacerbate their conditions. Indeed, paid family and medical leave will help ensure that no child or family is left behind.

We hope you and Connecticut lawmakers will vote favorably for H.B. 5003 and S.B. 1 this year to make paid family and medical leave a reality for all Connecticut residents, especially LGBTQ youth and their families. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alberto Cifuentes, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alberto Cifuentes, Jr., LMSW
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