

## **In Support of Paid Leave Bills, SB 1 and HB 5003**

Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, Senator Osten, Representative Hall, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

My name is Jessica Ciparelli and I live in South Windsor. I am here to support SB 1, *"An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave,"* and HB 5003, *"An Act Implementing a Paid Family and Medical Leave Program."*

Two year ago today, February 14, 2017, my mom went into the hospital for what would be her final stay. A breast cancer survivor since 2001, her cancer returned in 2014, metastasized to her spine. This was Metastatic Breast Cancer and it was terminal. It caused her to be become bedridden, but it never killed her spirit.

That Friday while at work, I received a text message from my sister, who was at the hospital with Mom. "You probably want to get here sooner than later," she said. I told my boss I needed to leave. I didn't know when I would be back in the office.

Mom died on March 1, 2017, after a 16-day stay at UConn Health. She was under hospice care during most of her stay, and my siblings and I spent as much time as we could with her. I was lucky I had an understanding employer, who allowed me to use a mixture of sick and bereavement time during the month I was away from work. My brother Greg, who was Mom's medical decision-maker, used five days of sick leave for parental care under state-granted FMLA, then vacation time with federal FMLA protection. My brother Chris used banked sick time and emergency days. Angela, my sister, worked on a laptop in the hospital room or from home in the evenings, with the blessing of her employer.

We made it work, each in a different way. But not everyone has the options we had available. Not everyone has understanding employers. No one should have to choose between caring for a sick parent and their job, caring for a new baby and their job, caring for a sick child and their job, taking care of their own health and their job, while worrying about how to pay the bills.

Unfortunately, FMLA doesn't work for most families. Workers are either not eligible (just 17% are eligible, with only 6% of those eligible being low-wage workers) or unable to afford unpaid time off, provided by the federal Act.

Rhode Island, New York, Massachusetts, and New Jersey have all passed Paid Leave Legislation. Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine are currently working on legislation. It's time to "Make CT Next."

Thank you for your time,  
Jessica Ciparelli  
South Windsor, Connecticut