

Anderson, Bryan

From: Kate Farrar <kcfarrar@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 14, 2019 10:58 AM
To: LABTestimony
Subject: SB1 HB 5003 Testimony
Attachments: PFMLTestimony.pdf

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

My name is Kate Farrar, I am from West Hartford, Connecticut. I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) who proudly serves as the chair of the CT Campaign for Paid Family Leave. I 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.

I am submitting testimony today because I like so many in our state I am faced with a true immediate need for paid family medical leave.

The day after this past Christmas, we brought my mother-in-law to the hospital at her doctor's urging given her last month of stomach pain. After a few days, the diagnosis was clear. It was pancreatic cancer. With further results, it was clear that the cancer was also in her liver and there was little hope in treatment.

My mother-in-law Linda is the strongest and most resilient person I know. She left everything in Vietnam after the war to bring her children as refugees to the United States for a better life. She, with my father-in-law, built a new life for my husband, Chan, and his sister, Stephanie, in Southern California. After her husband passed away of cancer 17 years ago Chan moved my mother-in-law and sister-in-law to Washington, D.C. to be closer to him. And, at the age of 85, my mother-in-law has remained a daily caregiver for my sister-in-law who is developmentally disabled.

I'm unable to give this testimony in person today because I'm on a plane to Washington, D.C. to meet my husband at the hospital where he's been 24/7 for 2 days with my mother-in-law. Right now, between my husband's job and mine we are trying to manage our work responsibilities, the caregiving, and trips between Washington, D.C. and CT. But we know in the coming weeks, as my mother-in-law starts to receive in-home hospice the need for us to be there together with her will be even greater.

The rest of the world sees the common sense and significant economic and social value of paid family medical leave. The United States remains one of only two countries in the world without it. And now, CT is surrounded by states with paid family medical leave, putting us at a remarkable disadvantage.

Each and every day the organization I lead, the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is on the front lines of advocating for paid family and medical leave. But, today, I wanted to share why I personally know so clearly, in this moment, why we need it. No family, including mine, should have to choose between our work, the dignity and care of a dying family member, and paying

the bills. The majority of workers are either ineligible or cannot afford to take unpaid leave provided by the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Just 17% workers - including just 6% of low-wage workers - have access to paid leave through their employer.

CT needs a paid leave program that is a comprehensive and accessible program that anyone, no matter their job or financial circumstances, can truly afford to take. I support S.B. 1 and H.B. 5003 because they meet the core values of a strong policy and sustainable program for all. CT's paid family medical leave must be publicly administered through Connecticut's Department of Labor (DOL), provide high wage replacement and job protection for all workers, expand FMLA's definition of family to include chosen family, cover family and medical leave, and be portable to the employee and is based on earnings, not hours worked.

I urge the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers to support S.B. 1 and H.B. 5003 this session. The cost is too great in our state to do nothing. Families suffer, business suffers with retaining employees, and our state's competitive advantage suffers.

Right now, I know that my mother-in-law is coming to terms with the reality that she will have fewer and fewer days surrounded by her family. Although her English is limited, my mother-in-law often will look up at me and calmly and softly say, "I love you". In honor of her love, I choose to share her story today.

Thank you,

Kate C. Farrar, Executive Director, Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)