



**Testimony before the Labor and Public Employees Committee in Support of
S.B. 1: AN ACT CONCERNING PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE
H.B. 5003: AND ACT IMPLEMENTING A PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE
PROGRAM**

February 14, 2019

Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Merrill Gay and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, a statewide membership organization committed to ensuring that all children in Connecticut are healthy, safe and ready for lifelong success.

The Early Childhood Alliance strongly supports S.B. 1 and H.B. 5003. These bills would create 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, including adult dependents and other family members. You will undoubtedly hear many compelling stories about the need for paid leave for all of those different circumstances. I'd like to make the case for paid family and medical leave from an early childhood development perspective.

One of the reasons you could take leave under this bill is the birth or adoption of a child. That's really important because human babies are born pretty helpless. They not only need someone to feed, change and cuddle them, their brain development is dependent on serve and return interactions with a caregiver. **A baby's healthy early development depends on having time to bond and form strong relationships with parents and caregivers.** According to eminent Yale Psychologist Dr Ed Ziegler, "It can take several months of focused attention for a mom, dad, or other caregiver to become finely attuned to their child's babbling and gestures, and babies progressively develop the ability to recognize their caregiver's voice, smell and face when they are around three months old."¹

The lack of paid family and medical leave means that too often, new parents miss out on that critical bonding time when they are forced to go back to work out of economic necessity.

- 1 in 4 working women who give birth have to return to work within 2 weeks.
- The majority of workers are either ineligible or cannot afford to take unpaid leave provided by the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).
- Less than 1 in 5 workers - including just 6% of low-wage workers - have access to paid leave through their employer.

¹ Zigler, E., Muenchow, S., & Ruhm, C. J. (2012). Time Off With Baby: The Case for Paid Care Leave. Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE.



- Pew research finds that the median length of paternity leave for American dads is just one week.² This is in stark comparison to the over two-weeks of paid paternity leave offered by the Democratic Republic of Congo, a low-income country still ahead of Connecticut on PFML.³
- An estimated 60 percent of low-income fathers report taking zero weeks of paid leave.⁴ Without a paid system, paternity leave becomes a privilege available only to high-income parents, despite the fact that children born into poverty may be those most in need of consistent, nurturing adult caregiving relationships which promote resilience in the face of Adverse Childhood Experiences and toxic stress.

PFML improves infant and early childhood outcomes, increasing paternal involvement in caregiving, fostering bonding during a critical window of brain development, and enabling parents to preserve their economic stability.

- Data from a nationally representative panel study of over 10,000 children born in 2001 found that fathers who take longer leave are more involved in child care-taking activities nine months later.
- More equitably sharing child-care taking responsibilities can help lower the gender wage gap in families, and fathers' participation in caregiving can increase children's educational attainment and emotional stability,⁵ as well as promoting better infant and maternal sleep.⁶
- Edward F. Zigler, the "Father of Head Start" who died just last week at his home in North Haven, ardently argued for a paid family leave system, noting not only the benefits that such a system affords to children but also in protecting "specific human capital," by allowing workers to return to their jobs after paid leave.⁷

I urge the Committee to support S.B. 1 and H.B. 5003 to ensure that Connecticut families can take the paid leave needed to foster the healthy development of their children. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

² http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/03/23/support-for-paid-leave-policies/sdt-03-22-2017_paid-leave-00-03-2/

³

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/06/14/619604235/which-countries-guarantee-that-new-dads-get-paid-paternity-leave>

⁴ Pragg, B., & Knoester, C. (2017). Parental Leave Use Among Disadvantaged Fathers. *Journal of Family Issues*, 38(8), 1157-1185

⁵ Lamb, M. (2004). *The role of the father in child development*, 4th ed. (pp. 1-18, 309-313). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; Smith, K. (2015). *After the Great Recession, More Married Fathers Providing Child Care*. Carsey School of Public Policy.

⁶ Tikotzky, L., Sadeh, A., Volkovick, E., Manber, R., Meiri, G., & Shahar, G. (2015). Infant sleep development from 3 to 6 months postpartum: links with maternal sleep and paternal involvement. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 80(1), 107-124.

⁷ Zigler, E., Muenchow, S., & Ruhm, C. J. (2012).