

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

My name is *Edward A. Hawthorne* and I reside in *Wolcott, Connecticut*. I stand in support of *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*.

It is an unfortunate reality that the majority of our State's workforce lacks access to any form of paid leave to care for an ill family member or newborn child. Passing paid family and medical leave is essential to maintaining a productive and healthy workforce. No one should be forced to choose between being there for a newborn child or sick family member and keeping the lights on.

When my first child was born, it was the happiest day of my life. However, it was also the scariest and one of the most trying experiences. You'd never know it now but my daughter spent the first eleven days of her life in the neonatal intensive care unit. During this time, work was the furthest thing from my mind. Fortunately, my wife and I had union jobs with contracts that held our positions and provided us with the paid time off we needed to focus all of our attention on what truly mattered: our daughter's health. I cannot imagine being prevented from spending every waking moment with my daughter in the ICU because I had to go to work to keep our insurance to pay for her hospitalization or to make our mortgage payment. No parent should have to choose between being there for a sick child and putting food on the table or keeping the lights on.

Let's face facts; those who are forced to work in such situations are not productive. Understandably their heads and hearts are elsewhere. So why not protect these jobs, provide people with a means to support their family, and prevent costly employee turnover to our business community? Connecticut is falling behind. We are surrounded by states that have already passed paid family and medical leave. We cannot afford to risk losing valuable workers to these surrounding states. The time to act is upon us. I urge you to support this program in order to prevent you and your loved ones from being forced to decide between a job and your family's well being.