

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF THE CHILD ADVOCATE
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TESTIMONY OF THE OFFICE OF THE CHILD ADVOCATE FOR
THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2019

IN SUPPORT OF THE FOLLOWING BILLS:

H.B. NO. 5003: AN ACT CONCERNING PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE.
S.B. NO. 01: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING A PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE PROGRAM.

Senator Kushner and Representative Porter and all other distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

This testimony is being submitted on behalf of the Office of the Child Advocate ("OCA") in support or in response to the above referenced proposed Bills.

The obligations of the OCA are to review, investigate where necessary, and make recommendations regarding how our state-funded systems meet the needs of vulnerable children. This Legislature granted the OCA broad authority regarding access to information about children and state-funded facilities and programs, which provides this Office with a unique insight into the needs of at-risk, abused, neglected and special needs children and the agencies that serve those children. The above referenced Bills, in which the OCA is offering the following testimony all seek to improve how the needs of this state's children are being met, including its most vulnerable children.

H.B. NO. 5003: AN ACT CONCERNING PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE.
AND
S.B. NO. 01: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING A PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE PROGRAM.

The OCA strongly supports H.B. No 5003, an Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave and S.B. No 1, an Act Implementing a Paid Family Medical Leave Program, which establish essential measures to strengthen the safety and well-being of children and families. Families need the ability to take care of their children and other loved ones. Parents should not be forced to choose between their job and the health and safety of their family members. Offering paid family leave will also help ensure

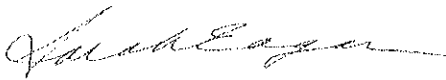
a thriving and competitive workforce by increasing the productivity, health and well-being of employees. The OCA regularly hears from parents and caregivers for children with specialized needs, who labor under the strain not only of caring for a child with disabilities but also the necessity of balancing their obligations to their child and their need to attend work and bring in money for their families. Parents and families can break under the weight of the pressure created by lack of family leave. This is preventable and fixable. The beneficiaries of the fix will be parents, families, and vulnerable children.

As we all know, the United States is the only industrialized nation that does not provide workers with paid time off to care for a new child. New mothers are often faced with a desperate and terrible choice, to lose their job and much needed family income, or to spend virtually no time bonding with and taking care of a newborn or even sick child. Many families cannot afford to take unpaid family leave, which can create significant financial hardship and family strain over the loss of critical income. Further, federal and state FMLA protections do not apply to all workers.

Multiple states now have a system to provide paid family leave, including California, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and New York. Providing paid family leave to Connecticut residents serves not only a moral imperative, but sound economic policy as the state looks to attract and maintain residents who will set down roots, grow a family, and retire in the State of Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter impacting this state's most vulnerable children. The OCA is committed to ensuring the safety of Connecticut's most vulnerable children through its continued efforts to work effectively with agency personnel and leadership regarding recommendations for system improvement.

Respectfully Submitted,



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