

# Hirsch Legal, LLC

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**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL:**

E: [LABtestimony@cga.ct.gov](mailto:LABtestimony@cga.ct.gov)

**Re: Written Testimony in Support of S.B. 1 and H.B. 5003: An Act Creating a Paid Family and Medical Leave Program**

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Attorney Carmina K. Hirsch. I reside in Milford, 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.

I have been a small business owner in this State since 2013 and currently employ two staff members – one full-time employee and one part-time employee. My business serves clients predominantly in the New Haven and Fairfield counties with family matters, including divorce and child custody issues, by providing litigation or mediation services.

Prior to owning my own business I was involved with a family business in which my mother (now retired) owned two Dunkin' Donuts franchises in Connecticut, employing dozens of workers annually for over 23 years.

I wholeheartedly support the passage of S.B. 1 and H.B. 5003, which aim to create a Paid Family and Medical Leave Program in Connecticut, for the following reasons:

**As a business owner in Connecticut:**

- The program allows for employee contributions via a small percentage of payroll to be placed into a fund (like a savings account) to be drawn upon if/when FMLA qualifying factors occur for up to 12 weeks annually. This enables an employee to

take leave to care for an elderly or ill parent or spouse, to care for a newborn or sick child, or to care for oneself when suffering from a qualifying medical condition. Employers contribute \$0.00 per employee into this fund.

- When an employee must take leave under the program, the employer does not pay them for the time they are not working. If needed those funds can be reallocated to hire temporary help during an employee's leave period, which ensures no increase to business overhead costs while still meeting the demands of clients/customers.
- The fund follows the employee. Should an employee leave an employer, they do not lose the amounts already accumulated, and there is no added paperwork on the part of the employer to effectuate this transition.
- The program aligns with our values and morals (as a business and as a society). My career success is inextricably linked with my and my staff's life success and ability to balance work demands with family needs. We want healthy, happy, employees who are mentally present at work doing their jobs well. When a FMLA qualifying event occurs where an employee needs time to care for a sick spouse, parent, child, or are suffering from their own illness(es), forcing them to work simply so they can pay their bills is cruel.

**As a taxpayer and resident of Connecticut:**

- FMLA doesn't work for most working families. 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.
- Connecticut is now *surrounded* by states that have passed paid leave. Rhode Island, New York, and New Jersey have passed and implemented successful paid leave programs. Massachusetts passed paid leave in July 2018. Similar legislation is also pending in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. We must pass paid leave to stay competitive in our region and attract and retain workers in Connecticut.
- Paid leave is critical to economic and racial justice. Lack of paid leave disproportionately impacts workers of color, who are overrepresented in low-wage jobs that do not provide paid leave and, due to racial wealth and wage gaps, have fewer resources to absorb the financial impact of a family or personal medical issue. Access to paid parental leave is critical to the health of Black women, who face much higher rates of maternal mortality and complications from pregnancy.

- Paid leave benefits Connecticut's economy and businesses. Without paid leave, workers fall behind on bills and medical expenses, and are more likely to file for bankruptcy, which negatively impacts the economy. Paid leave improves worker retention and saves employers' expensive turnover costs. After more than 10 years of paid leave in California, employers overwhelmingly report positive or neutral impact on their business.

I strongly support S.B. 1 and H.B. 5003. I hope the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers will vote favorably this year to make paid family and medical leave a reality for all Connecticut workers.

Thank you for your time,

*Carmina K. Hirsch*

Carmina K. Hirsch, Esq.