



**Testimony of Shannon Jacovino, Director of Advocacy & Public Policy, The Arc Connecticut
In Support of Senate Bill 1 An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave and
House Bill 5003 An Act Implementing A Paid Family Medical Leave Program.**

February 14, 2019

Thank-you Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, the members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, for the opportunity to testify on this important issue. I would also like to thank the many legislators who have shown their support for Connecticut families by introducing these bills.

On behalf of The Arc Connecticut, the state's oldest and largest advocacy organization for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families, **I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 1 - An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave and House Bill 5003 – An Act Implementing A Paid Family Medical Leave Program**

The Arc was founded more than 65 years ago by parents who believed that their loved ones with I/DD should have the opportunity to live, work and play in their communities just like everyone else; and we have remained committed to promoting and protecting the civil and human rights of people with I/DD ever since. We are truly a parent-led civil rights movement. In Connecticut, our 14 Arc local chapters deliver over \$100 million in jobs and supports to thousands of people in 162 communities.

We support paid family medical leave because it offers all workers, including people with disabilities and their parents and caregivers, with the opportunity to balance competing personal, financial, and workplace responsibilities. Research shows that access to paid leave can be transformative for health, employment, and socioeconomic well-being.

Like all workers, workers with disabilities and the family members who support them, need to access paid leave to welcome a new child, provide care for a family member with a serious medical condition, or if they experience their own serious medical condition.

In the Fall of 2017, The Arc of the United States released a first of its kind report with the Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality to look at the intersection of the need for paid leave and workers with disabilities and families that include a person with a disability.

Here is a link to that study, which I strongly encourage you to read: https://www.thearc.org/file/public-policy-document/Georgetown_PFML-report_Dec17.pdf.

Below are key findings about the importance of paid family and medical leave specifically for people with disabilities and their families that I think are relevant to the paid family medical leave bills before the Labor & Public Employees committee right now:

■ **The prevalence of disabilities across the lifespan and demographic changes indicate the need for more comprehensive policies that can address the realities of modern work-family balance needs.** Nearly 1 in 5 people in the U.S. have a disability, and over 1 in 4 households includes at least one person with a disability. Physical, mental, and sensory disabilities affect people of all ages, including around 3.7 million children, 26.3 million working-age adults, and 17.4 million seniors.

■ **Paid leave boosts economic security and opportunity. People with disabilities and their families often experience greater financial insecurity and are more likely to face barriers to employment that can render the financial impact of unpaid time off particularly devastating.** Job-protected paid family medical leave can reduce poverty and mitigate the potential for workforce discrimination and exclusion. It can also positively affect wages and allow families to plan, adjust their spending, and avoid premature depletion of savings.

■ **Paid leave helps workers, including people with disabilities and their families, care for themselves. Addressing one's own illness is the most common reason U.S. workers take unpaid leave, making up 55 percent of all leave taken.** Paid leave increases opportunities to take time off for a serious medical condition without seeing a sharp drop in income or putting one's job or employer-based health insurance at risk. In addition, it can increase access to preventive care, such as going to doctor's appointments, and lead to better overall health and well-being.

■ **Paid leave helps workers care for family members with disabilities.** Approximately 2 in 5 adults report caring for an adult or child with significant health issues. This caregiving is most often unpaid and can impact one's own employment. Access to paid family medical leave can help workers balance their personal care needs while working and providing support to a family member.

■ **Access to paid leave is particularly limited for individuals with disabilities and their families— especially those who are low-income, women, young people, LGBTQ, and/or people of color.** Workers with disabilities are more likely to be in part-time, low-wage jobs that often don't offer even basic benefits—much less paid family and medical leave. Over 2 in 3 part-time workers don't have even one sick day. Workers with disabilities are twice as likely as workers without disabilities to be part-time.

The Arc Connecticut encourages you to take these findings into consideration and we ask you to pass and implement a comprehensive paid family medical leave bill for all Connecticut workers, including people with disabilities and their families.

Thank you.

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