

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

My name is Sarah Locke and I live in New Haven, CT. I stand here today in full 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*.

One of the first things that happened to me after my 28th birthday is that I was diagnosed with cancer. Sitting alone with my doctor and hearing those words from her was daunting, but it was when I called my mom to tell her this news that I felt the real panic set in. Neither of us knew what to do, but knowing what to do doesn't matter when you're sick. So I quit my job as a waitress and my mother stopped working as a realtor for the many months it took to undergo my surgery and treatment. Both of us went unpaid for this time. The end result was a full recovery from cancer, as well as thousands of dollars in medical debt, along with other mounting debts that occurred for both my mother and I because we weren't able to work. There was no other option though; it's what families do for each other.

I'm almost 40 years old now, cancer-free and quite healthy. I'm also queer and I'm unmarried, but I am not alone. I have my chosen family all around me, most of us in our 40's and queer and unmarried, but not alone. And although we have no biological or legal ties to each other, I know that any one of them would have done for me what my mother had to, with or without pay. It's what families do for each other. But why should any of us have to go unpaid to care for our loved ones? Why should we have to choose between sickness and debt? And yet, in our queer communities especially, we must make these unmanageable and impossible choices everyday.

I know you're as concerned as I am about the vitality of each and every person in our state, especially our marginalized communities that are most affected by our state's lack of paid leave. I'm talking about women, and people of color, and my queer families. I'm talking about all of us. We need more than just access in order to survive in this world; we need your advocacy and your full support so that we can thrive in it.

I strongly support the passage of these bills, and recognize that it is critical to the prosperity of our state. I hope the Committee and the Connecticut lawmakers will agree and vote to make paid family and medical leave a reality for all Connecticut workers this year.

I thank you all for your time and consideration on these bills, and especially for the hard jobs you all do for us each and every day.

Sarah Locke