

Make the Road Connecticut
850 State Street, Bridgeport, CT
360 Farmington Avenue, Hartford, CT
(203) 549-8841



February 14, 2019,

Labor and Public Employees Committee Public Hearing

Letter of Support for 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.

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

My name is Barbara Lopez and I am the Director of Make the Road Connecticut. Make the Road Connecticut is an organization that builds power of immigrants and low-income Latinx in Bridgeport and Hartford to achieve dignity and justice. In the past four years, we have done this through community organizing, provided legal/survival services, taught transformative education, and supported policy innovation. We tackle the issues that directly impact our members: immigration reform, economic justice, education equity, LGBTQ justice, womxn's justice and youth justice. Our member base is over 1000 and is composed of five member committees.

Our members support 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. S.B. 1 will create and implement a comprehensive, statewide system of paid family and medical leave for workers who need to take time off to care for themselves or a loved one, or welcome a new child.

Our members are majority womxn of color and tend to be head of household. They understand the feeling between having to choose to stay home to take care of a sick family member or going to work to make sure that their expenses are paid. Our members are tired of the feeling of working without sense of security net for their families. The lack of access to paid and family medical leave perpetuates the racial wealth gap that severely limits the resources and financial health of people of color living in Bridgeport and Hartford. People of color experience greater chronic health conditions and face barriers to accessing health care, which impact their ability to remain in the workforce. People of color who are caregivers to their families tend to be younger and more likely to be employed than white caregivers, which means they may face greater conflicts between work and family. Without paid leave, workers fall behind on bills and medical expenses, and are more likely to file for bankruptcy, which negatively impacts the economy. Rhode Island, New York, and New Jersey have passed and implemented successful paid leave programs. Massachusetts passed paid leave in July 2018.

We urge the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers to support S.B. 1 and H.B. 5003 this session to help Connecticut remain economically competitive and give working families in our state the support they deserve.

Thank you for your time,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara Lopez", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Barbara Lopez, Director of Make the Road Connecticut