

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

My name is Danielle Morfi and I live in North Haven, 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. This is the **THIRD** time I have submitted my testimony and the need for this bill continues to grow.

I have been affected by the lack of paid leave in Connecticut 3 times thus far. In 2011, my terminally ill father was nearing the end of his life. I would go to NY to help care for him. In order to save and secure the time I needed off for my father's imminent funeral, I would often work from his hospital room so that the time away from my job was clocked as working hours. When we brought him home to die, I worked from his apartment in Queens as hospice care came in. As a caregiver and, frankly, as a human being, it is tortuous to watch your loved one die and simultaneously worry about being able to afford the time you are taking off.

When my first son was born, I was allowed 16 weeks off from work. 14 weeks of this time was unpaid. For the breastmilk supply to regulate, mothers need at least 6 weeks with their babies to nurse on demand. I was determined to nurse and bond with my child, but we did so at a financial loss. While I was off, I still had to pay my insurance premiums as well as the out-of-pocket costs for the delivery. We nicked and dined everything for months to afford this time with our newborn.

In November 2016, after giving birth to my second son, I hemorrhaged. I couldn't drive, lift or do anything strenuous for two weeks, all the while caring for a newborn and 2-year-old. My husband could only take one week off and had to use paid vacation time. Any other time off would be unpaid, and we simply could not afford that. With our high deductible health plan, and even with an HSA, we are STILL paying for the delivery and my prenatal care. We also did not have family nearby that could take off unpaid time from work to help. So, we took a risk and hoped that the last week of recovery did not result in another hemorrhage. If I did not heal and had hemorrhaged, it would have resulted in more unpaid time off and staggering medical bills, or worse.

The fact that we must play Russian roulette with our health is disturbing and unacceptable. My family is not alone in this experience. Honestly, we're fortunate. People across the state have gone bankrupt over medical crises that are not only emotionally and physically traumatic but devastating to their financial stability for years to come. Paid family and medical leave in CT will stop this vicious cycle of punishing working-class people for having children, for getting sick or daring to care for an ill loved one. Why must we choose?

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. I thank you for your time and contributions in furthering the effort to make CT a more family-friendly state.

Danielle Morfi
North Haven, CT