



Connecticut

Labor and Public Employees Committee

February 14, 2019

Testimony of BARBARA F. MUNCK, AARP Volunteer

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)**.

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

My name is BARBARA MUNCK, and I am an AARP volunteer from NORTH HAVEN. I would like to express my 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*). I have been a family caregiver at all stages of my life and I would like to receive care if I need so in the future.

Most of us are, have been, or will be a family caregiver, or will ourselves need the help of a loved one to live independently. Family caregivers are the backbone of Connecticut's long-term care system. They are the first line of assistance for most people, helping to make it possible for older adults and people with disabilities to remain at home, and live with dignity and independence.

As a mother, daughter, wife, and sister, I relied on others to help with caregiving. I watched my divorced parents care for my traumatic brain-injured sister for decades in their homes with the help of services during the day when they worked. My late mother had heart disease for 15 years and was diagnosed with dementia months before she died in 2005 and watched my parents juggle their work lives and neglected their own retirement savings to care for my sister. For over a decade I set up pills, doctor's appointments, frequent hospitalizations and coordinated her discharge care all the while taking care of my own family and working full time. Bella Vista in New Haven provided a community to keep her active and literally keep an eye on her. The lab tech down the hall would help her put in her daily eye drops since she could never seem to get the solution in her eyes on her own. My husband Don would do her grocery shopping and keep her company. At the end, she required supervision and since I was working, she did end up in a nursing home where she died. I loved my mother, but it was a physical relief that I was not balancing work, family and her every-day care. Relief was short-lived: less than 10 months later, my husband was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. The cycle of blood tests, scans, chemo treatments became almost routine and was repeated four years as non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma recurred, and this time, a stem-cell transplant and radiation were added to double chemo. 3-1/2 years later during a routine scan, pancreatic cancer was found and despite chemo, radiation and surgery he died 14 months later. With the help of our daughter, good friends and neighbors, a flexible employer and despite exhaustion, we managed. I was lucky. I had a job with benefits allowing me the time to care for him without fear of a loss of paycheck or a job. That stress along with the real

stress of caring for an ill family member must be unbearable. Families are trying hard to do what is best for their family members but could use some help.

459,000 Connecticut residents are unpaid caregivers.

- Connecticut caregivers provide 427 million hours of unpaid care each year.
- This unpaid care is worth an estimated \$5.93 billion annually and includes: help recovering from serious illness or injury, assistance with activities of daily living, and providing support to help people stay in their homes as they age.

I strongly support S.B. 1 and H.B. 5003 and I thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.