

Testimony of Michelle Noehren
Colchester, CT
Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee
2/14/2019

Distinguished Chairs and Committee Members:

My name is Michelle Noehren and I am a resident of Colchester, Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide strong support of S.B. 1, An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave and H.B. 5003, An Act Implementing a Paid Family Medical Leave. I believe in these bills for a variety of reasons.

As a mom myself who did not have access to paid family and medical leave during or after pregnancy, I understand the challenges many parents face when trying to figure out how to pay their bills after they welcome a new child into their life. While I was fortunate to have an understanding employer, as well as vacation time that I had saved up, the majority of new moms are not as lucky, and many lower-income women end up going back to work within two weeks of giving birth. For moms like myself who had a c-section, doctors advise that you should not even be driving a car for 6 weeks following surgery. New parents should not be forced back to work before they are physically and emotionally ready.

As the sister of someone with multiple chronic illnesses, I know that paid family and medical leave would make a huge difference in the lives of those working with disabilities. Sometimes my sister's illnesses flair up unexpectedly and she needs time to rest and get help from her doctors, but that is very difficult when she faces income loss when she is unable to work. There are so many people with chronic illness that want to work, that are great at their jobs, but that just need time off now and again to tend to their needs. Access to paid leave would help keep people like my sister steadily employed and give them peace of mind that they can take the time they need to care for themselves.

Lastly, the 7-year-old son of a friend of mine died this past December after a year-long battle with osteosarcoma (bone cancer). He required a rare surgery to have part of his leg amputated and underwent months of chemotherapy. For parents with sick children, paid family leave would allow them to focus on caring for their loved one without worrying about how they will pay their bills. It is already incredibly devastating when a child becomes seriously ill, let's support families in crisis by ensuring they can stay afloat financially while navigating a terrible situation.

A system of paid family leave, that includes full job protection, makes sense for our economy, our work force and our families. Thank you again for bringing these bills forward.