



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

My name is Conor Pfeifer and I live in Bridgeport, Connecticut, representing Triangle Community Center (TCC), Fairfield County's LGBTQ+ community center. I also share the sentiment of Patrick Dunn of New Haven, Executive Director of the New Haven Pride Center (NHPC).

I speak supporting the Campaign for Paid Family Leave as outlined in SB 1 and HB 5003. As the language in that version of the legislation is inclusive and supports LGBTQ+ families. I suggest amending language in S.B. 881 because as written this bill excludes many in the LGBTQ+ community which is of great concern to our organization. LGBTQ+ workers need an inclusive paid family and medical leave system that will allow time to care for extended family and loved ones who don't share biological or legal ties.

I remember one of my first phone calls at TCC. Around this time of year in 2014, we got a phone call from a young man, a minor, who was in distress. Hearing his anxiety over the phone I listened to him telling me about how he was kicked out of his home for coming out to his parents. I tried my best to refer him to resources. He was too scared to reveal specifics about his case.

All I really knew for sure, beyond the fact that the family who shared his blood had shunned him, was that he was able to count on some friends trying to help him navigate a harrowing moment in his life.

Nearly a year later, TCC started its case management program. We saw what the word "family" means to our clients. It varies person to person. The common thread among the people who come to us for help is that most of them have a core group of people who love and support them as a blood relative *should*, but may not be a blood relative. These support people are the kinds of people who try to provide the person in distress food off their table in trying times. They encourage them to grow and love them unconditionally. They are in every sense of the word our clients' family.

The Governor's SB 881 does not include care for those family members—chosen family—who may not be related to an individual by blood or legal ties. Chosen families can develop at an early age, for some it's out of necessity because LGBTQ+ people too often face extreme stigma within their biological families and communities. Without paid leave, the LGBTQ+ community, which is already underemployed, under-serviced, and more likely to experience economic stressors relative to its peers, would be more susceptible to bankruptcy, and would more likely force our community out of jobs they are unable to keep. Any legislation passed by the General Assembly must have an inclusive definition of family which would include our chosen families. Not everybody can count on their blood relatives for care.

I think about the young man who called us back in 2014. The fact that his parents kicked him out of his home in a supposedly accepting and welcoming town haunts me. I remember then the calm in his voice as he spoke to me about his friends who were helping. He had family. It was just the kind of family that needs your support today. I urge the committee to support SB 881 only if there is amended language with an expanded definition of family to ensure all LGBTQ+ families, like the families who are part of Triangle Community Center and the New Haven Pride Center, are included in a paid family medical leave system in our state.

Thank you for your consideration.

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