

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

My name is Kaitlyn Shake and I live in Stratford Connecticut. I am 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**

I have been a nurse for nearly a decade caring for those in critical care to women's health/maternal child. Too many times I have bore witness to too many families struggling with the reality of trying to figure out how they are going to take care of themselves or loved ones because they don't or can't get the appropriate time off of work. Only 17% including just 6% of low wage workers have access to paid leave through their employer.

We are all one medical emergency/diagnosis away from needing a comprehensive PFML bill. CT patients and families need to have the support and protections in place through strong policy in order to be present and available when they themselves or a loved one are in need of care. The stress alone of trying to deal and plan accordingly is overwhelming.

Last May, the day before mother's day, the tables turned for me and my family as my mother suddenly became acutely ill and almost died. We had been in the emergency room for a few hours and as I anxiously waited for her to come back from a diagnostic test I looked down at my phone and realized it was 11:30pm and there was no way I was going to be able to report to work the next day by 7am. We had been in the hospital since 9pm and due to her unknown source of ailments the doctors had ordered a list of diagnostics. I knew instinctively as a nurse that my mother's health status was deteriorating and was put in the position of being her medical advocate and her daughter. The first few hours I was by myself and was simultaneously managing her care at the bedside and trying to be supportive and loving of her and she lay there screaming, shaking and sweating in pain.

My family started to arrive into the waiting area and this gave me the opportunity to call my job to call out. But, I remember trying to calculate how much time I had left in my paid time off/sick bank. I had less than forty hours because a week and a half later I had a scheduled vacation time block. I then realized that I couldn't apply for FMLA because I hadn't been at my current job long enough to be eligible. My mother's medical emergency like many people in this situation was a nightmare. Finally, another doctor evaluated her and rushed her off for CT scan which showed she had a perforated bowel and needed emergency surgery right away or she might have died within the next few hours from sepsis. My mother got through nearly six hours of surgery due to the acuity and complex nature of her situation. Her recovery in the hospital last several days but I couldn't be there for her as I had wanted too because I was scheduled to work the following three days in a row. On my breaks I was on the phone with her doctors, nurse manager of her unit and case managers trying to figure out her plan of care. I work 12 hours shifts so as soon as I got out I drove thirty minutes to the hospital to be there with her, comfort her and try and relieve her anxiety before getting her relaxed and calm to go to sleep. I left the hospital around 10pm drove thirty minutes home. The next few days were like this. And

on top of this we were in the middle of moving. The following weeks and months were extremely stressful and we understood that her recovery and healing process would be long. I became and continue to be her full time caregiver. 6 months later in November she needed surgery again and developed complications a few days post op and suddenly we were back where we were in May trying to figure out how to manage taking care of her needs, our household, bills, balancing my job and my responsibilities. FMLA wouldn't be enough--it wouldn't fully help me pay the bills. I needed PFML.

We are still dealing and managing with her complications today but she is finally on the mend. CT needs S.B. 1 and HB 5003 to pass so that Connecticut families, patients and caregivers are able to access the 12 weeks of paid leave as proposed in the bills in order to take care of ourselves and loved ones when a medical emergency or diagnosis requires us to do so. Connecticut families can't afford to wait and I urge you to support these bills .

Thank you,  
Kaitlyn Shake  
Stratford, CT