



**Testimony Supporting
S.B. 1: An Act Concerning Paid Family Medical Leave
H.B. 5003: An Act Implementing a Paid Family and Medical Leave Program**

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Labor and Public Employees Committee
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Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, Senator Miner, Representative Polletta, and Esteemed Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify **in support of S.B. 1: An Act Concerning Paid Family Medical Leave and H.B. 5003: An Act Implementing a Paid Family and Medical Leave Program.** We are testifying on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based child advocacy organization working to ensure that all Connecticut children have an equitable opportunity to achieve their full potential.

We applaud the Committee for raising S.B. 1 and H.B. 5003, which will help families develop strong and healthy relationships, will help ease the burden on families earning low incomes by allowing them to care for themselves, their children or other family members, and will help develop a healthier and more productive workforce in the state.

These bills will create and implement a comprehensive, statewide system of paid family and medical leave for workers who need to take time off to care for a loved one, or to welcome a new child. Employees can take up to 12 weeks of PFML within a 12-month period and receive 100 percent of their weekly earnings, up to a cap of \$1000/week. The act also expands the (unpaid) federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)'s definition of family to include family members not related by blood or marriage but who are family nonetheless.

Paid Family Leave will be a Self-Sustaining Program that Will Not Add to State Costs. PFML will be an insurance program fully funded by employees. All start-up costs will be reimbursed to the General Fund within the first year of collections. The program will be completely self-sustaining, able to handle benefit claims and support staffing needs.¹ This is not a costly state program. It is a vital protection, paid for by employee contributions, that will help all Connecticut residents participate in the economy to their full potential.

Paid Family Leave Supports the Growth and Development of Infants and Newly Adopted Children.

Family medical leave enables parents to spend crucial time with their newborn infant or newly-adopted children paving the way for healthy child development. Research shows that paid parental leave leads to a host of positive life outcomes for both generations, including decreased infant mortality, decreased child behavioral problems, increased rates of breastfeeding duration, decreased rates of maternal post-partum depression, decreased rates of parental conflict, and increased rates of father involvement through childhood.² Bonds formed in the first twelve weeks of a child's life are critical for the long-term success of the child. Children begin building vital brain architecture from

the time they are born, developing language and vocabulary skills, hand-eye coordination, and motor coordination.³ The child-parent relationship during this time also lays the foundation for all other close relationships the child will encounter throughout life.⁴ By giving parents time to develop secure attachments with their new child, family medical leave plays an important role in nurturing healthy child development in the long-term.

Paid Family Leave Supports Working Families.

PFML is vital for families' economic stability. The majority of workers in the United States are either ineligible or cannot afford to take the unpaid leave provided by the federal FMLA, and only 17% workers have access to paid leave through their employer. Even fewer workers in fields that tend to pay lower wages or are seasonal have access to paid leave – for example, only 6% of leisure and hospitality workers and 5% of construction workers have access to paid leave.⁵ Of workers who do take time off with reduced or no pay, the majority find it difficult to make ends meet.⁶

Lack of paid leave disproportionately impacts women, who, in the absence of paid leave or other options, have to return to work right after giving birth or quit their jobs. Lack of paid leave disproportionately impacts workers of color, who are overrepresented in low-wage jobs that do not provide paid leave and, due to racial wealth and wage gaps, also have fewer resources to absorb medical costs and lost income from unpaid leave. The lack of paid leave represents a profound economic burden to those affected and their families and also limits the state's economic growth, because our economy benefits when everyone is able to participate to their full potential.

Paid Family Leave Will Benefit Connecticut's Economy and Businesses.

Companies and states with paid family and medical leave are more likely to attract and retain a millennial workforce.⁷ *Connecticut is now surrounded by states that have passed paid leave.* Rhode Island, New York, and New Jersey have passed and implemented successful paid leave programs. Massachusetts passed paid leave in July 2018. Similar legislation is also pending in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. Research also shows that access to paid family and medical leave results in a healthier, and therefore more productive, workforce. Workers take better care of their health, take fewer and shorter sick leaves throughout the course of their careers, and have less inpatient care.⁸ We must pass paid leave to stay competitive in our region and attract and retain young workers.⁹

Paid Family Leave will Provide Essential Protections to Workers in All Families, not just those Related by Blood or Marriage.

These bills expand the definition of family to include “include any individual related by blood or whose close association is the equivalent to a family member.” In Connecticut, 33,000 children live in a household where neither parent resides and 51,000 children live with cohabiting, unmarried partners.¹⁰ Nationally, 57 million Americans live in multi-generational family households, double the number who lived in such households in 1980. This figure is higher among communities of color. About 25% of Latinos and African Americans live in a multi-generational household, and 27% of Asian Americans do.¹¹ These bills crucially protect those who, in an emergency or during an illness, rely on care from extended family or family not related by blood or marriage.

Furthermore, the experiences of other states with PFML laws show that an inclusive definition of family does not lead to a significant increase in usage or uptake. This is because only a very small portion of PFML leave claims are to care for an ill family member (rather than for bonding with a child), and only a very small portion of claims to care for an ill family member are to care for family other than a child, parent or spouse.¹² In other words, this expanded definition of family provides essential protections to employees with negligible additional cost.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or need additional information. You can reach me at rsilbermann@ctvoices.org or (203) 498-4240 x121.

¹ Institute for Women's Policy Research. (2018). "Estimating the Cost of Paid Family and Medical Leave in Connecticut," available at <https://iwpr.org/publications/paid-family-leave-estimate-ct-2018/>.

² Christopher Ruhm, "Parental Leave and Child Health," The National Bureau of Economic Research (May 1998), available at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w6554>;

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Rege, M., & Solli, I.F. (2010). The impact of paternity leave on long-term father involvement. CESifo Working Paper #3130: Labour Markets;

³ Paula Wiggins, "Infant Brain Development," Texas Child Care (Spring 2000), available at http://www.childcarequarterly.com/pdf/spring00_braindev.pdf.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Drew Desilver. (2017). "Access to paid family leave varies widely across employers, industries." Pew Research Center. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/03/23/access-to-paid-family-leave-varies-widely-across-employers-industries/>.

⁶ Jacob Klerman, Kelly Daley, and Alyssa Pozniak, "Family and Medical Leave in 2012: Technical Report," US Department of Labor, (updated February 4, 2013), available at <https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/fmla/fmla-2012-technical-report.pdf>.

⁷ Elmer, Vickie. "Issue: Work–Life Balance Work–Life Balance." *Business Researcher* (2017);

Campione, Wendy A. "Corporate Offerings: Why Aren't Millennials Staying?." *The Journal of Applied Business and Economics* 17.4 (2015).

⁸ Månsson, A., & Lundin, A. (2010). How do masculinity, paternity leave, and mortality associate?: A study of fathers in the Swedish parental and child cohort of 1988/89. *Social Science and Medicine*, 71, pp. 576-583.

⁹ Pete Saunders, "The Demographics Behind GE's HQ Move to Boston: Young Talent is on the Move," *Forbes* (19 April 2016), available at

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/petesaunder1/2016/04/19/business-goes-where-talent-flows/#71f39ca24f3e>.

¹⁰ Children Living with Neither Parent: Connecticut, Kids Count Data Center: A Project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2015), <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/111-children-living-with-neither-parent>;

Children Cohabiting with Unmarried Domestic Partners: Connecticut, Kids Count Data Center: A Project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2016), <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/110-children-living-with-cohabiting-domestic-partners>.

¹¹ Richard Fry and Jeffrey S. Passel, In Post-Recession Era, Young Adults Drive Continuing Rise in Multi-Generational Living, Pew Research Center (July 17, 2014), <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/07/17/in-post-recession-era-youngadults-drive-continuing-rise-in-multi-generational-living>.

¹² Paid Family Leave Market Research, Andrew Chang & Co. for the California Employment Development Department (2015), p. 31, http://www.edd.ca.gov/Disability/pdf/Paid_Family_Leave_Market_Research_Report_2015.pdf; Family Leave Insurance Workload in 2014: Summary Report, New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Office of Research and Information (October 2015), http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/forms_pdfs/tdi/FLI%20Summary%20Report%20for%202014.pdf; TDI Annual Update: January-December 2014, Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (2015), p. 1, <http://www.dlt.ri.gov/lmi/pdf/tdi/2014.pdf>.