

Anderson, Bryan

From: Lisa Thomas <lisadthomas.13@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 12, 2019 9:33 PM
To: LABTestimony
Subject: Testimony in support of S.B. 1:and H.B. 5003:

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

My name is Lisa Thomas. I live in Coventry, CT. I am writing 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.

When our daughters were just 13 and 9 years old, my husband needed emergency open heart surgery the day after Thanksgiving. I'm sure you can imagine the fear and anxiety this sent rippling through us. When my husband explained the heart-lung machine procedure to the girls, our oldest exclaimed, "so they are going to kill you, fix your heart, and then bring you back to life?" We knew that once we got past the surgery, there were many months of rehab and recovery ahead. And while the thought of the surgery and recovery were terrifying, we at least had the reassurance - and privilege - of strong employment contracts along with coverage under FMLA that protected both of us from losing our jobs and our income while we took the time needed to keep our family healing. For my husband that meant 3 months before he was able to return to work - where his job was waiting for him.

However, the majority of working families are either ineligible or cannot afford to take unpaid leave provided by the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Further, just 17% of workers - including just 6% of low-wage workers - have access to paid leave through their employer. This means that most of my friends, neighbors and community are unable to care for themselves and their families in the most effective ways possible. That is unacceptable in the great state of Connecticut. It is time to pass S.B.1 and HB5003.

Our neighbors to the north, south, east and west have all implemented paid leave programs. and it is time for us to join them. Many of us worked very hard during elections and at the heart of our efforts was a desire for economic and racial justice in Connecticut. Lack of paid leave disproportionately impacts workers of color, who are overrepresented in low-wage jobs that do not provide paid leave. Racial wealth and wage gaps mean many workers have fewer resources to absorb the financial impact of a family or personal medical issue.

Please support employees' ability to earn paid family and medical leave under SB1 and its implementation under HB5003. It is the right thing to do for Connecticut's people.
Thank you for your time,

Lisa Thomas
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Coventry, CT