REP. WINKLER (56TH): In the interest of safety I would ask you to note the location of and access to the exits in this hearing room. The two doors through which you entered are the emergency exits and are marked with exit signs. In the event of an emergency, please walk quickly to the nearest exit. After exiting the room, proceed to the main stairs or follow the exit signs to one of the fire stairs. Please quickly exit the building and follow any instructions from the Capital Police. Do not delay and do not return unless and until you are advised it is safe to do so. In the event of a lockdown announcement, please remain in the hearing room, stay away from the exit doors until an all-clear announcement is heard.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you Representative Winkler and we will get started with elected official list. Representative Gary Turco and John Shulansky. Good morning.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Good morning. I am Gary Turco, State Representative from the 27th District of Newington. Co-Chairs Porter and Kushner, Vice-Chairs Hall, ranking member Polletta and distinguished members of the Labor Committee,
Representative Winkler. I would like to express my support for House Bill 7316, TASK FORCE TO STUDY AND CLARIFY EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF PROVIDERS, A TASK FORCE TO STUDY AND CLARIFY STATUS OF HOME CARE PROVIDERS IN THE STATE. I will now turn it over to my constituent and Managing Director of Elders Choice of Connecticut, John Shulansky to go into more detail, thank you.

JOHN SHULANSKY: Thank you Gary. Distinguished Chairs and members of the Committee. As Gary said, my name is John Shulansky and I'm Managing Director of Elders Choice of Connecticut, which is a registered companion homemaker agency considered a registry and a employer fee-paid employment agency registered with the Department of Labor. I am the Acting President of the Connecticut Association of Home Care Registries. The Registry Association is a very strong advocate for domestic worker rights. We endorse the establishment of a task force. The more than 100 Connecticut HCA registries refer and place direct home care workers to provide services in another person’s home. Registries provide important and in some cases, lower cost options for consumers to access state regulated non-medical care.

Consumers, caregivers and HCA registries will benefit greatly from serious policy discussions. Domestic workers have choices in employment status, consumers have choices in employment status. Clarification is essential to focus on the core mission, which is to provide quality non-medical home care support with adequate protections for consumers and domestic workers alike. The Registry Association needs to be at the table to assure that the provision of home care services, consumers and business have clarity and domestic workers have the
benefits and the protections they deserve while providing the essential services and options to those who need care. This goes beyond employment status to assure that all domestic workers have basic, fundamental rights. These include minimum wage and overtime, notice of eligible employment status and benefits at the time of employment, freedom from discrimination, and a safe work environment.

Domestic workers also need to know what services are required and conditions of their work, if any. Workers should never be placed in a case they cannot support.

I would be remiss ladies and gentleman without adding that as a critical component to health care, home care needs -- needs a broader, serious policy discussion in the state. Home care is part of the Department of Consumer Protection and there are 650 organizations actively offering services in the state. Home care does not involve clinically trained and regulated healthcare workers subject to a licensure and oversight. Anyone can be a home care worker and provide non-medical care in a private home, without any training, experience, or health exam. They can transfer, toilet and bathe your loved one, make a meal for someone with a dietary restriction, or be a companion for someone with dementia. We all need to do better for our aging population and their caregivers and the Registry Association is committed to work with the state to find adequate the protections for consumers and domestic workers. I'd be glad to answer any questions.
REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you so much for that testimony. It resonates. I actually had an opportunity to do some of that home care work with my grandfather as he was making his transition and it does take a special person. But I think it's a labor of love when you boil down to everything. And it's very critical, you're right. We do need to seek better care of our elders and our aging population. Afterall, they took good care of us, right?

JOHN SHULANSKY: Absolutely.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Yeah. Any comments or questions from the Committee? Seeing none, I'd just like to say thank you for taking the time to be here this morning. And I thank you Representative Turco for bringing in your constituent.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome. Next up we have, okay, he's not here. I'm getting a nod. And I don't see Representative Currey. Okay, Representative Anne Hughes, is she here. Okay. We're going to get to the public list quick. Representative Phipps and Arvia Walker. Everybody's sleeping I've been told. (Laughing) All right, so we're going to move on to the public list and we're going to start with Liz Gustafson, and please forgive me if I didn't get that right. Good morning, and please pronounce your last name for me 'cause I know I butchered that.

LIZ GUSTAFSON: Gustafson.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. The floor is yours.
LIZ GUSTAFSON: (inaudible) in support of SB 881, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A CONSUMER --

REP. PORTER (94TH): I'm sorry, Liz. Let me just interrupt you for one moment. Can you turn your mic on?

LIZ GUSTAFSON: Is that better?

REP. PORTER (94TH): That is much better, thank you.

LIZ GUSTAFSON: I am testifying in support of SB 881, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE PROGRAM. SB 881 will create and implement a statewide system of Paid Family Medical Leave for workers who need to take time off to care for themselves or a loved one or welcome a new child. Paid Family Medical Leave is a fundamental component of supporting women so they can choose when to start a family and have the ability to take the leave they need to meet their healthcare needs. For many low wage workers, particularly women of color, this rate is limited through financial burdens represented by a lack of access to paid family and medical leave and facing continued institutionalized racism and mounting health disparities.

Women of color and all workers of color need access to real paid leave that provides a wage replacement of 100 percent of their weekly earnings up to a cap of $1000 per week. Racial health disparities are exacerbated by a lack of infrastructure to support workers and the inclusion of a high wage replacement is a biocomponent of an equitable paid family and medical leave program.

Reproductive freedom requires having real choices to support the decision to start a family and become a parent as well as those relating to controlling
reproductive health. Providing paid leave to all individuals to provide care also supports equitable caregiving and further contributes to gender equity.

In moving this policy forward paid family and medical leave should be accessible to all, which means supporting workers who may not fit into a traditional nuclear definition of family. Ensuring the definition of family includes chosen family would ensure no one is left behind when moving forward to support Connecticut workers and we would be one of the most inclusive Paid Family Medical Leave programs in the country. The NARA Prochoice Connecticut largely supports SB 881; however Connecticut workers and their families have waited long enough for paid medical family leave. We urge lawmakers to move an inclusive Paid Family Medical Leave forward that is equitable and accessible to all workers. Thank you for your time.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And thank you for your testimony, Liz. You -- I guess I'll start out with this question. How would you define chosen family?

LIZ GUSTAFSON: I would say those who are not related by blood. I don't think an -- and expanding on that. I don't know how someone could say who and who -- who is and who is not someone's family. I know personally I rely on close friends that have helped me through my own illness and for me that -- that -- you know I think of them as family and I know especially in the LBGTQ plus community there is -- chosen family is incredibly important and so they must be included in the definition of family.

REP. PORTER (94TH): So can you tell me why in the LBGTQ plus community chosen family is so important?
LIZ GUSTAFSON: I would say -- I mean I personally do not want to speak on that because I am not a member of that community.

REP. PORTER (94TH): That's fair.

LIZ GUSTAFSON: So I, yeah.

REP. PORTER (94TH): That's fair. And then you spoke about the importance of sole wage replacement so just -- do you want to elaborate on that a little more? Why is that so important that if you're going to take Paid Family Medical Leave, you would need full wage replacement?

LIZ GUSTAFSON: Well, that's -- that's incredibly important for our lowest paid workers, those that are making either the minimum wage or below minimum wage. But for more specifics I would -- I would like mention that Maddie will be giving testimony. Maddie Granato right after me and she'll be able to answer more specifics on that.


SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Hi there, good morning. How are you?

LIZ GUSTAFSON: Good thanks, how are you?

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you for testifying. It's interesting to hear your testimony because I appreciate that you support 881, but you also in some of your comments would seem to be supporting SB 1 and House Bill 5003. Obviously we've had a lot of testimony on those other Bills and so I appreciate your drawing some distinctions there and if not as closely as I just did but -- or as clearly as I did just did, but I think we are aware of some of the
differences between the Bills and appreciate your testimony today.

LIZ GUSTAFSON: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Any further comments or questions or Liz? Seeing none, thank you for coming in this morning to testify.

LIZ GUSTAFSON: Thank you very much.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Have a good day.

LIZ GUSTAFSON: Thank you and thank you for having me.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. I see we have with us Representative Anne Hughes from the 135th Assembly District. Good morning.

REP. HUGHES (135TH): Good morning Chairman and Chairwoman and I bring up Representative Nolan with me as newly elected member but also I would like to speak on behalf on the Progressive Democratic Caucus as well as myself in support of an inclusive definition of family in this Paid Family Medical Leave Bill. And I am just going to speak for a moment about my own experience.

I was called by my cousin just a few years ago that her son was in late stage kidney failure, 16 years old and was getting Medevac'd back to the US. They were in the country of Benin West Africa. She was a Peace Corp Program Director there. And I met them down at Georgetown Hospital in Washington D.C. and in the hospital the kidney specialist said, we need to get you on a transplant list immediately or you will die. And so we got some more information and found out that living donor transplant organs last much longer and are more viable, especially for a
young man for the viability of his lifetime so I
decided to be a donor even though he is not my
biological relative, I knew we would be a match.
And the specialists were very skeptical. They said,
you know, you're more than twice/half his age. He's
only 16 years old. There's almost very little
likelihood you're going to be a tissue match, a
blood match and a viable candidate to be a donor but
in fact we were. And I called my husband and said
I'm going to donate my kidney to Hamad and so I need
you to come down here and take care of me during the
transplant operation.

I was an independent social worker, contractor,
program director of Housing Us so I didn't get any
paid leave. My husband fortunately worked for the
United Church of Christ and did offer paid leave and
it's incredibly important because I was able to do
that and take two weeks to recover from the
transplant operation and he's doing really well.
And he's a thriving student at Wake Tech Community
College in North Carolina.

But the reason I am telling you this story is
because we never know when our chosen family and
extended family will need us to save their lives.
And when they call on us, we go. And this is my
godson and I don't have any biological children but
I know that he will also take care of me if I need
to or if something happens to my husband. And I
think we owe the chosen family because they have
been taking unpaid leave, they have been taking time
off to care for their loved ones and especially the
LGBTQ community. I remember in the 1980s during the
Aids crisis when people were being abandoned by
institutions and families as they were sick and
dying. And so these chosen families have taken care
and saved people's lives and done it without paid leave and these are extended families and godchildren and it's time that we support basically what we owe, because they've been doing it for generations. So that's why I'm really, really urging and in fact insisting that we include the modern inclusive definition of family in this leave policy. Otherwise it's excluding those who have historically been excluded and marginalized and done the work anyway of caregiving. Do you have anything to add to that Representative Nolan?

REP. NOLAN (39TH): Good morning everyone. It's stories like this and others that make you want to make sure that you as a leader in your community, make sure that there are things that are made to happen that cover everyone, just like everyone else. There is a lot of times where our extended families come into play in areas such as my legislative friend just explained and they don't get covered in situations as such, and it's just imperative for families that have been doing this for so long to be part of that and that is one of the reasons that I am in support of it.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Well thank you and thank you for that compelling and moving testimony, Representative. Any comments or questions from the Committee? Yes, Senator Minor.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you. Good morning Madam Chair, good morning. Thank you for being here. So when I go back and I look at the study that was done, the study to put in place the dollars to fund this program, there was no cap in that study. The study as I read it we would have a cap at $138,000 so people that made north of that we're
going to pay in on a continuous basis. And so insolvency remains a concern of mine and my question is, if we have an interest including the opportunities that you two have spoken about, which I see some reason for us to include for all the reasons you've pointed out, if the way -- if we were to try and balance the program so that we maintain the cap at least initially, I think the Governor's Bill advises a reduced weekly payment so instead of getting 100 percent of your wages, I think it says that the rate would be something less than that, would be some factor times minimum wage. Is that a viable solution in your eyes in effort to include as broad as family model as possible?

REP. HUGHES (135TH): Are you talking about -- through you, Madam Chair, are you talking about after a certain point or are you talking about right from the get-go in terms of a reduced 100 percent? I'm not clear.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): So I'm talking about right at the get-go. I believe in all of the Bills there are trigger mechanisms that allow either the Labor Commissioner or the legislature to manipulate the formula in some way to try and increase the likelihood of the funds being adequate to service the population. And so if we were to look at, in some cases a more conservative approach and in other cases some might argue a more liberal approach in terms of a definition of family. Is that a reasonable approach to take in your eyes?

REP. HUGHES (135TH): I would love to see us pilot it at 100 percent with the -- with the cap of what's in 30 -- Bill 32 -- Bill 328.
REP. PORTER (94TH): It's the Social Security cap, which is currently 132-8.

REP. HUGHES (135TH): Oh, 132-8. And pilot it you know, like you said the -- the Labor Commissioner has that opportunity to adjust those rates after you know, the next session, in a year or two. Here's the thing that I heard the testimony last week or two weeks ago and I hear the concerns about basically fraud and people taking you know, taking this leave as sort of entitlement.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Madam Chairman, let me stop you right there.

REP. HUGHES (135TH): Okay.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): I have not been in that camp talking about fraud.

REP. HUGHES (135TH): Excellent.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): So --

REP. HUGHES (135TH): Excellent. So you're talking about solely viability of the solvency of the Bill.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): That's my question. That's my question. Because I think your example is -- is an accurate example. I have very close friends that grew up you know, not being understood and their family model is very different than my blood family model.

REP. HUGHES (135TH): Right.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And so, you know I can see a reason for us to be talking about all of these things including four hour increments under some scenario. My concern is that if we start off with a rich plan, some might argue too rich, the only
adjustment is going to be upward in terms of the amount of money that we get from people and that's going to cause chaos. I think it's going to cause a lot of irritation among some populations and I'm just wondering whether there's a way for us to kind of modify our approach a little bit to try and do as many of the things that you want to do, and I might want to do and that has nothing to do with fraud.

REP. HUGHES (135TH): I appreciate that comment. Through you, Madam Chair. I would suggest we start at the fairest approach, the most equitable approach and tie inclusive -- definition of family with a cap or a reduced rate. And I would allow the -- I would suggest that the Labor Commissioner really monitor the solvency very carefully and make the adjustments accordingly. I think that again, to remind us that we -- these caregivers have already been doing the work. They've been unpaid caregivers taking time out of their family, usually the women quite frankly, but my husband was really kind enough to be recruited, but usually it's unpaid family women caregivers that are staying home with the -- with the parents, with you know an Alzheimer's episode or you know an injury or an aging situation or a child who's sick or caring for grandchildren, caring for grandnephews. They are the ones that are taking time off and our aging population has to be in the workforce longer and longer because they can't afford to retire. So, what little income they're making we have -- it has to be part of the household equation and so I'm most concerned about the impact on those most vulnerable who have already been doing the work unpaid. And I think the equitable approach is to ensure that that is part of the pilot going forward.
REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. Is that all Senator Miner? Are you done? You good? All right. All right, thank you. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I actually -- we've heard a lot of testimony and I appreciate both of you being here. Not so much heard it today but we heard it when we heard the earlier House and Senate Bills on this issue and I really want to say how much I appreciate you both being here. I recognize that the Governor's Bill 881 has some really great things in it and I think you highlight some of the points that are of concern and you did it in a way that I think was a little bit different than we've heard from other witnesses and it's very -- it's very important to recognize, so I really appreciate you being here this morning. Thank you both.

REP. HUGHES (135TH): Thank you, Senator.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Any further comments or questions? I'd just like to thank you as well. You did bring a different flavor to this and it designates with me simply because I've been coining this as the life and death bill because people are living having an opportunity to live or die and that goes for both the workers and the people that they're caring for. We have people going to work because they have to.

REP. HUGHES (135TH): They have to.

REP. PORTER (94TH): They can't afford to stay home because if they stay home they're not getting paid and when they're not getting paid, their bills are not getting paid, their children are not being fed. So very emotional for me to hear the sacrifice that you -- you chose to make for someone that was not
"your blood relative," but we all know that family is rooted and grounded in love and there's no greater gift that what you gave your nephew/godson. So I want to say thank you for that. I know he thanked you endlessly but I thank you as a colleague, a sister and a friend for what you did. And thank you for bringing that testimony to this Committee and sharing that story with us. And thank you Representative Nolan for being here as well.

REP. HUGHES (135TH): Thank you both.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome. Up next we have and I do believe I see him, we have the Treasurer in the building. Treasure Shawn Wooden.

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Good morning, sir.

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: Good morning.

REP. PORTER (94TH): How are you?

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: I'm doing very well.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Great to see you. I just need you to turn your mic on and the floor is yours.

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: Great. Representative Porter, Senator Kushner and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 5, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A WORKFORCE PIPELINE AND JOB CREATION TASK FORCE.

The Bill before you would create a task force charged with making recommendations to the legislature to prepare the state's future workforce for well-paying manufacturing and technical jobs located in the state of Connecticut. I commend the
Committee for tackling this issue, one that is in my view vital to Connecticut's future.

Manufacturing and especially advanced manufacturing that requires a relatively high level in the computer and design skill area is undergoing a resurgence in Connecticut. But there are not nearly enough skilled workers or training programs to meet this pressing demand. Today there are roughly 13,000 unfilled manufacturing jobs in Connecticut. Over the next two decades it is estimated that Connecticut's manufacturing industry will need between 25,000 and 35,000 new skilled workers for the state's 4,100 manufacturers. I can't think of a more immediate and vital need that ought to be addressed through the coordinated efforts of the state, business and academic communities. It is not only vital for individuals in our workforce, but for the very future of Connecticut's economy.

As State Treasurer I am committed to ensuring that Connecticut's residents have access to good jobs and that the state's economy is ready for the 21st century. This means that our residents have access to the good jobs as well as ensuring that employers in need of high-skilled, advanced manufacturing workers are able to fill that need. To me this Bill and the task force it would establish are concrete steps forward toward doing just that.

Last fall I visited an advanced manufacturing workforce-development program at Grasso Technical High School in Groton, which is part of the Eastern Connecticut Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative. It receives both state and federal funding and mainly serves as a pipeline to produce workers for Electric Boat and the small manufacturers in the EB supply
chain. The program brings together key stakeholders from government, nonprofits, and the private sector to help address workforce needs in southeastern Connecticut. The jobs that are being filled are good jobs. They provide wages and career paths leading to financial independence and security, offering second career opportunities and retraining for the existing workforce while also attracting and keeping young people in the state.

Since 2016 it has a better than 90 percent placement rate for more than 1,000 workers with 140 employers. It brings together key stakeholders from government, nonprofits, and the private sector to help address workforce needs in the region. This program is exactly the kind of successful workforce development program and partnership that the task force should look to as an example and study how it can be replicated across the state.

As State Treasurer, not surprisingly, I spend a lot of time focused on making the right investments to generate excellent returns. Investing in our workforce in a way that supports our in state business community is an investment that makes sense. It's an investment that will generate excellent returns for our residents, our business community and our State as a whole.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposed legislation. And look forward to working together to make sure that Connecticut's economy and our workforce are ready for the future. Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. Any comments or questions for the Treasurer? Senator Kushner.
SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): So good to see you here today testifying before our Committee. I think, is this the first time you're testifying before the Labor Committee?

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: It is. I've submitted testimony.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): That's what I thought 'cause sometimes I you know, I have to step out for a minute and I thought -- I was afraid I might have missed you but --

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: Okay.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): But it's good to see you in that chair both before the Labor Committee and serving as Treasurer, thank you.

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: And if I could say so publicly, it's good to see you in that chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): (Laughing) So this is you know, this is the self -- the mutual admiration club we have going on but I do want to thank you for coming and testifying on this Bill, particularly the example you gave regarding Electric Boat. You know, that is one of our state employers that I am very familiar with having represented the designers there and there are such great opportunities for young workers for -- you know, for the people who stay with the company for years and years and that -- you know, I really like the idea of showing that as a model where the whole community has benefited from having this employer, also having you know, the opportunities for apprenticeship programs there and also seeing the coordination with the technical high school. So I think it's a great example. I'd love to see this model expanded across the state and I
know that means we have to really invest in our education programs and our training programs in the community for high school, so I'm glad you brought that to our attention. It's very helpful, thank you.

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: Thank you. And if I could add, you know I've been -- I've been critical of a lot of workforce training programs over the years. And when I served on the local level I would observe that these workforce training programs, a lot of them, the jobs that were produced were mostly for the trainers and so I think the way to do workforce development is actually looking for the -- where the demand is and that's why I'm so interested in this program and models like it where we're serving the demand, and it's a true kind of win-win for our workforce, for employers and moving our state forward. And so -- so I think this is exactly where we ought to be headed.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. And I'll just chime in on that because you're hitting on something that I've actually been working on and is actually a Bill on this Agenda today, an ACT CONCERNING THE URBAN AND RURAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT. Because in your testimony you said, this means that our residents have access to good jobs, right? And Electric Boat is a dynamite company. It's a great job, great benefits, the whole nine. But you know I'm a urban legislature and my constituents, they can't access those jobs. So I've very interested to hear how you feel about the plan that I'm trying to put in place around urban and rural workforce development because they have the same issues.
TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: So, one I'm in support of what you are in terms of that notion and I believe programs like this equally applicable. So this is program when the trade heights for this Connecticut program happens to be at Groton Technical High School, happens to be at a community college elsewhere, right? So you'd have -- you'd have high school students, urban communities you know, and Hartford Prince Tech -- Technical School, but you have these technical schools where this is not for -- you don't have to have an advanced college degree to actually get proper skills and training to earn a living, good job with benefits and build a career, right? And so I think this is generally applicable throughout every community in our state where we can identify a demand for job growth and support that and produce a workforce to meet that demand.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay. So there's definitely a demand, right? In the cities?

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: Oh there's -- there's --

REP. PORTER (94TH): This is what I hear when I knock on doors. What can I do for you? We need -- we need work.

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: They say we need a job. That's right.

REP. PORTER (94TH): So I wanted to ask you because you also referenced in here that they receive state and federal funding and many of the pipeline is through Electric Boat and small manufacturers and their supply chain. Do you know where the small manufacturers in this supply chain are located throughout the state?
TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: The -- a lot of the -- with this particular program a lot of them are in the southeastern Connecticut region. They're just proximity to Electric Boat, but not exclusively.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay. And yeah, I think that -- that kind of wraps it up because you and I have been talking and we'll definitely continue this conversation off line but I'm very interested in this Bill. This is a great Bill and I'm interested in the way that it will actually tie into 7317 and making sure that where the need and the demand is in the urban and rural areas in the state are met. So thank you so very much for coming in today and sharing --

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Your testimony with us. And as always, it's great to see you.

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: Great to see you. Look forward to working with this Committee.

REP. PORTER (94TH): I'm sorry. Senator Kushner for the second time.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Yeah, I just wanted to mention you raised a good point, Representative Porter because I do know, because I know Electric Boat, there actually is a very skilled, very small plant that is producing, as part of the supply chain and it's up here off of Route 8 and -- not up here, over that way. (Laughing) Off of Route 8 and it's a really small plant but it's in a rural area as well. And I think there are other opportunities but I also think that Representative Porter raises an important point that there's no reason why a technical school in Hartford or New Haven cannot --
or Bridgeport or Danbury by the way, could not be tied into what they're doing in Groton, because once workers are trained they have the motivation and the ability to move to another part of the state. I've traveled there a lot. It's not like traveling across the earth to get to a good job and I think people will do it and so I think it is about studying how do we expand the good programs that are in that area and make sure that we're bringing them to other urban areas, so I think that was a very good, helpful dialogue there. Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you for bringing that point across because we do need to make sure that our urban and rural areas are as viable as they can be in so far as supplying employment to the people that live in those districts and not making an impossible or hard to reach task. So thank you again.

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: All right, thank you very much.

REP. PORTER (94TH): All right. You have a good day.

TREASURER SHAWN WOODEN: All right.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. Representative Quentin Phipps, is he here? Okay. We'll go back to the public list and next we have Maddie Granato. Good morning, Maddie. How are you?

MADDIE GRANATO: Good morning. This is the quickest I've ever had to testify. So hi Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Maddie Granato and I work for CWEALF. I'm also really proud to serve as the Campaign Director the
Connecticut Campaign for Paid Family Leave. I'm here in support of Senate Bill 881 which will create a system of Paid Family Medical Leave here in our state with a few concerns.

First we really want to thank Governor Lamont for introducing legislation that provides up to 12 weeks of job-protected paid family and medical leave to all workers. For more than half a decade we fought for paid leave here in our state. We've watched as every state around us has passed their own policies and list out what these programs have gotten right and where Connecticut can really be a leader to pass the strongest, most comprehensive paid leave policy.

Just last month paid leave supporters packed this building to share their stories and urge lawmakers to pass real comprehensive paid leave this year. Connecticut workers need a policy that's accessible and inclusive of everyone in our state no matter where they work, what they earn, who then depend on or who they care for. This means a program that benefits those who need it most and that provides high wage replacement, which is especially important for workers who can't afford to miss any of their paycheck while they're out on leave.

We also urge the Governor to support language that's included in Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 5003 that expands on FMLA's definition of family to include chosen family. A truly accessible paid leave program covers all workers regardless of who they care for.

We also really want to make clear that campaign supports a program that's publicly administered to ensure transparency of what should already exist as a human right without any sort of profit incentive.
We do not support a program that would be outsourced to a third party or a private insurer.

At this point the data research I'm pulling is really all clear. It's really all -- it's clear by the number of people who have come to this building so far this year and in years past to make their voices heard and share their own stories. Connecticut workers really can't wait any longer for paid leave and we really look forward to -- to working with the Chairs and members of the House and Senate and the Governor's office to get it done this year. So thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Maddie. Any comments or questions from the Committee? Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): So you mentioned in your testimony just now concern about making sure that it's a publicly administered program. You know, I share that view. I think that -- I hate the idea that there's any profit motive in somebody administering this program but I wondered if you could talk about how other -- how other states -- I know you're familiar with the other states that are doing this. Can you talk a little bit about how they're doing the program?

MADDIE GRANATO: So every -- every state that has passed this program so far all administer their programs through their equivalent of their Department of Labor.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): And do you know if those programs have been maintained successfully?

MADDIE GRANATO: Yes. So California has had their program on the books since the early 2000s. New
Jersey -- California and New Jersey also just recently passed expansions of their programs because they were so successful and they you know, want to make sure that they're providing paid leave to more people in their states. Rhode Island has also had a really successful program on the books for a while and Washington state became the first state to pass a paid leave program without a temporary disability insurance. Program already on the books just a few years ago and they're implementing their paid leave policy now so we can really look to them, and Massachusetts who just passed a similar program last summer, so.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): You also mention in your testimony high wage replacement. So can you talk a little bit about how you see that being done? You know like what the formula should look like?

MADDIE GRANATO: Yeah. So I would -- you know right now currently just -- just 6 percent of low-wage workers have access to paid leave through their employer so this program would benefit really those who don't have access to -- to this -- to this policy already and are already struggling to make ends meet. And if you look at you know, recent research from the United Way, found that 40 percent of households in our state are barely making ends meet as it is without a medical emergency or a personal -- you know, family member getting sick or -- and needing to take time off, unpaid from work. So it's really important that we provide -- pass a program that you know, provides a benefit that really supports those who are unable to miss any portion of their paycheck.
SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I know that you've testified here before but I wonder if you could remind me that -- I know that this is -- that your organization and the coalition have done some analysis of how -- how effective this would be but also how popular this program would be. Can you talk a little bit about both the surveys you've done but also sort of anecdotally the kinds of comments you've heard from people about this program?

MADDIE GRANATO: Yeah. So the campaign was started I think in 2012 so we've been around a while. Someone said you know, it's been at least half a decade and when you say it like that it really feels like a long time. But several of our campaign members, Connecticut Working Families and AARP have both done poll -- extensive polling on paid leave and it -- it's consistently polled over 80 percent among voters. And in 2017 the campaign commissioned a poll of small businesses in our state and found that 77 percent of small business owners support paid leave legislation the way it's been written. That's entirely employee funded, so.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I'm glad you mentioned AARP because I know that took me a little bit by surprise and I think at our last hearing there was a whole contingent of AARP folks and -- but I liked it because as someone whose getting older, I certainly recognized and -- and I heard this a lot when I was talking to folks going door to door, some people think of this as a program that's just for young kids who are hoping to have -- start their families and -- but I recognize fully that this is a program for people like me who someday my kids might need to be available to take care of me if I were to get sick and I wouldn't want them to suffer -- their
families to suffer from the loss of wages that they would experience. So I was glad that you mentioned the AARP. Is there anything else that you would like to add to today?

MADDIE GRANATO: I think you know; the Governor's Bill is a really strong place to start and we were really happy it included -- it -- it includes job protection for all workers. That's really great, but we would really like to see a Bill passed that includes the definition of family that's in SB 1 and House Bill 5003, and I know people are here who will share their stories and talk a lot more about that today, so.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thanks so much.

MADDIE GRANATO: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Senator Kushner. And I know you have done extensive work, you and CWEALF and I'm just wondering if you could speak to -- well I'll just ask the question. How have other states that have implemented paid family leave weathered financially? Have there been any insolvency issues to date?

MADDIE GRANATO: Yeah, no, so as I mentioned, you know California and New Jersey have had their program on the books for a while and both of those paid leave programs you know, withstood the 2008 recession and they've never gone insolvent. You know there's been a lot of talk about you know, the math not being right or it just not adding up. I really want to stress that any numbers that come out about this Bill are done by you know, researchers and economists and actuaries who do this for a living and you know, have this cost benefit model
that they use for every other state pretty much that has passed a policy so it's not just advocate scribbling down math on the back of a piece of paper. Like these are -- these are people that do this for a -- for a living in their organization, so.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you for that. And have there been any states that have had to increase the benefit because of issues? Because if my memory serves me correct, I can't remember the state, but there was -- there was an incidence where people were not taking advantage of the Paid Family Medical Leave because it was similar to the family medical leave. They couldn't afford to take it because it wasn't 100 percent wage replacement. Can you speak to that, please?

MADDIE GRANATO: Yeah. So that was actually California's program. At the start it only provided about 60, I think 66 percent of wage replacement and they -- they found based on doing research and outreach that people weren't -- weren't using the program because 60 -- receiving 66 percent of your paycheck when you're already facing you know, mounting medical bills, you know a family emergency where you're already struggling to make ends meet, you really can't afford to go you know, any portion without your -- without your paycheck so. I believe they went back very recently and increased the benefits, so.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. I appreciate you remembering. I couldn't remember what state it was but it was California. And then you did talk about, was it California and New Jersey actually did an expansion?
MADDIE GRANATO: Yes, yeah.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Can you just talk about the expansion looks like? What did they expand specifically?

MADDIE GRANATO: Yes, I would have to get back to you on -- on more details but I do know that New Jersey just expanded their paid leave program just a few weeks ago actually and I know that one of the things they expanded on was their definition of family and the Bill that ended up passing just a few weeks ago in New Jersey has the close association language that's included in Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 5003, so yeah.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. And I look forward to receiving that information off line.

MADDIE GRANATO: Yeah, thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you for your testimony. Was there any other comments? Yes, Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108TH): Good morning, Madam Chair. Good morning, ma'am.

MADDIE GRANATO: Hi.

REP. SMITH (108TH): How many states already Paid Family Medical Leave?

MADDIE GRANATO: Yeah, so it started with California and Washington state passed paid leave in 2017, then every state around us. So New -- New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Rhode Island have paid leave. Massachusetts and Washington are implementing their programs. They're in the process of doing so.
REP. SMITH (108TH): So we have a few states who are implementing and we have basically two or three states that actually have their program in place right now? So it's a pretty small study. Okay. And any of those states that currently have -- either implemented or are implementing the plan, do they have opt-out provisions for employees?

MADDIE GRANATO: Yes. I think they -- some of the -- some states do -- do include similar language to what's in the Governor's Bill, Senate Bill 881 that gives you know, the employer -- certain employers the ability to apply to be Administrator of the program to -- to use their own plans of paid leave. That's included in the Governor's Bill.

REP. SMITH (108TH): Are there any plans that allow the employees to opt-out?

MADDIE GRANATO: I don't believe so. I'd have to double check that but I think -- I think the point is that you know, the funds -- funds are more solvent when you have everyone paying in. It works like an insurance program, so you need a big you know, pool to make sure that the fund operates and has enough money in it so.

REP. SMITH (108TH): Okay. So, you know if you could check on that just to be sure --

MADDIE GRANATO: Uh-huh, yeah.

REP. SMITH (108TH): If there are plans out there that give the employees the ability to opt-out if they choose not to. And the plans that are out there right now, the plans that are before we passed out a week or two ago, the plans from the Governor pretty much applies to all employees regardless of how many employees are in the particular business,
so whether you have one employee or 100 employees, the plan applies. Are -- for the other states are -- is that similar as well or is -- does it apply based on if you reach a certain number of employees?

MADDIE GRANATO: Yeah, so every other state to my knowledge includes employees that work for one or more, an employer of one or more. So we'd be following you know, different state models in passing that language.

REP. SMITH (108TH): Okay. Well thank you for coming up and sharing your expertise. Thank you, Madam Chair.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Representative Smith. Any further comments or questions? Yes, Representative Polletta.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Thank you, Representative and good morning. Thank you for being here. Just to talk about what Representative Smith. I think -- I asked the question last public hearing, I believe it was to Senator Looney regarding the mandate to pay in to one-half of one percent and I think the correct answer is here, is that there are no exemptions because if you don't pay the one-half of one percent then the fund will become insolvent so we need everyone in the state to pay in in order for this to actually work. So there is no opt-out unfortunately, so you know whether you agree with the program or not I think in proponent of the Bill and you know, Senator Looney eluded to last time, if everyone did not pay the one-half of one percent there's no way the state would be able to afford this program and you would either have to sweep another account to put money or raise taxes across the board. So again, it's -- it's -- that's as
simple as it. There is no opt-out and it's -- it is a mandate across the board. Thank you.

MADDIE GRANATO: Can I make a comment to that?

REP. PORTER (94TH): Sure.

MADDIE GRANATO: I think the point of not having an opt-out too is you know; paid leave is planning for the unplanned. You never know when you'll get sick or a family member will get sick and you'll need to take, you'll need to use the program so you know, God forbid someone you know, opts out of a program and then you know the next month they realize, oh man, I'm -- I was just diagnosed with a serious illness, I need to take leave. So that's the point of having everyone contribute too.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, madam. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I appreciate your testimony and your clarification on that as well. I do want to say I was here when Senator Looney testified. I'm pretty sure he didn't say we would have to sweep other accounts because I'm confident he didn't say that. I think that his point being made, which you made in referencing that it's like an insurance plan. Like insurance plans, you are always mindful that you can't have -- that it's dangerous to have opt-ins and opt-outs and they're always controlled when there are like open enrollment periods because you want to protect against adverse selection where someone isn't just opting in when they need the benefit, and I think that we're very cognoscente of that and the way that all these Bills have been crafted, all three of them. I think are crafted with an understanding that this is an insurance
program and that it is therefore necessary that everybody participates, but I appreciate your answer on that.

MADDIE GRANATO: Oh, thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Yeah, and just listening to Senator Kushner just reminds me of you know the choice I made around my car insurance. My car is ten years old this year so you know, I don't have to pay full coverage but because of the kind of car I drive, if it gets hit I can't afford the parts. So I choose to pay into that, the extra money just in case. And you don't know. You're right. You never know. I may never have an accident or I may have an accident, right? But better to -- better to need it and not -- better to have it and not need it than to need it than to not have it. Did I say that right?

MADDIE GRANATO: Yeah. (Laughing)

REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay. You get where I'm going, right?

MADDIE GRANATO: Yeah, I do.

REP. PORTER (94TH): I think that's why it's important and I thank you along with Senator Kushner for making that point because you can't predict illness, you can't predict an accident. You can't predict the need, so it's better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it. So thank you for your testimony.

MADDIE GRANATO: Yeah, thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Anything else you'd like to add before you leave?
MADDIE GRANATO: No, thank -- thank you both for all your work, so thanks.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Ditto. Thank you. All right, up next we have Representative Jeff Currey and Robin McHaelen. Good morning.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Good morning. My apologies for my tardiness. Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the Committee. Jeff Currey, State Representative East Hartford Manchester, South Windsor. I'm going to immediately yield my time to Robin McHaelen, the Executive Director of True Colors who gives the best introduction of any program you will ever hear in your life.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Just need you to turn the mic on.

ROBIN MCHAELEN: Thank you, thank you. So I'm going to read some prepared remarks but before I do, I just want to set some framework. So true colors for those of you who don't know who we are and what we do. We do education and advocacy for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and true sex, queer questioning, two spirits, same-gender-loving, pansexual, flexural, not discreet, not labeling, straight is, straight so far, straight with options, straight but stuff happens, gender bending, gender bending bi-gendered, pan-gendered, A-gendered, A-sexual, nonbinary and other sexual and gender minority youth. We work with teenagers as you can tell. (Laughing) The acronym is LGBTQIABCDEFG. (Laughing) I would start with you know, I always start with the litany of the language, not because I have any expectation that you'll remember that but really to make the point that the language is changing and it's really important, not only is the
language changing, but families are changing. When you look at the statistics around families in the United States today, less than 50 percent of children are growing up in a family where there are two biologically related -- two legally married people of different genders who are biologically related to all of the people, all of the children in the home. Most people are growing up in family systems that are -- that are different than that. And so as we look at the concept of chosen family and what does family look like, what those family structures have in common is not the content of the -- the makeup of the parties, but the love and the care and the connection and the responsibility that they have for maintaining a family for each other, so I want to put that out first.

So I'm here today to express general support for SB881, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE PROGRAM. I firmly believe that this is critical legislation for all of the reasons that you've heard from others about who is included and who is not included under the current legislation. At the same time, as a leader of an LGBTG plus organization I cannot fully support the Bill unless the language is amended to include an expanded definition of family. This Bill needs an LGBT-inclusive definition that reflects our realities. This is essential to the people True Color serves and to the LGBTQ community as a whole because our families and loved ones don't always share biological or legal ties.

SB 881 as written excludes many in the LGBT community and that is a great concern to my organization and to our constituents. As a lesbian myself I've been working on behalf of LGBTQ youth
and families for more than 25 years. Like the majority of workers who are either ineligible or cannot afford to take unpaid leave provided by the Federal Medical Family and Medical Leave Act, many of my constituents, including myself are left out of the supports available to hire income people.

LGBTQ people of color as well as people who are transgender or nonbinary tend to have higher unemployment rates and are more likely to work in lower paying jobs. In addition, many of my constituents create chosen family, a close network of friends who serve as the equivalent of a family relationship. This is true across the lifespan for LGBTQ plus folks. Youth are more likely to be homeless or rejected by their families of origin compelling them to create chosen families to which they do not have legal ties. LGBTQ older adults are nearly twice as likely as non-LGBTQ plus people to live alone.

In a recent survey 42 percent of LGBTQ plus adults between the ages of 45 and 64 said that they would said that they would depend on close friends in an emergency. This compares to 25 percent of the general population. You will likely hear lots of testimony talking about the economic reasons to support paid family leave. It helps Connecticut stay competitive, all of the states surrounding Connecticut have paid leave programs. Research shows that paid family leave programs boost an employer's bottom line. It has a neutral or positive effect on employee turnover.

I'm asking you to support inclusive language, not just because it is economically appropriate but because it is the right thing to do. We are urging
-- I am urging the community to support this Bill only if there is amended language with an expanded def -- expanded definition of family to ensure that all LGBTQ plus families are included in a Paid Family Medical Leave system in our state. Families matter. Even maybe especially when your family is your closest friend. Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. Wow. Very honored to have you here today. Thank you, Representative Currey for doing what you do, showing up and showing out. She has given a tremendous testimony and you've answered some of the questions that I had around you know, why this is important but if you wouldn't mind just expanding on a personal note.

ROBIN MCHAELEN: Okay.

REP. PORTER (94TH): The importance and why you know, your community has a need to have children and family. How does that come about? And I know we know that you know, some -- some people get excommunicated. I've had kids on my couch that that's happened to, like literally gotten kicked out of their homes because they came out to their parents. I had an older friend, he was probably in his mid-40s when this was going on. He ended up staying with me for about six or seven months because he was afraid -- a grown man afraid to come out to his family because it's a prominent family, nationally known.

ROBIN MCHAELEN: Yeah.

REP. PORTER (94TH): So if you could just speak to that and what that does, how it impacts you. Not just job wise but emotionally, spiritually, how that affects you in your everyday life.
ROBIN MCHAELEN: I'm going to tell you a quick story I think. There's a young person whose now in probably their late 20s but I have known this kid since she was 11. And she came into the system, she -- she was in her family of origin and right from birth -- the child was assigned male at birth, right? But right from the time this kid was a toddler, he at the time was always putting on his mother's shoes and wearing her shirt as a -- as a -- his hair and so the family kept trying to beat the girl out of this little boy and that's how the kid came into DCF. And the first placement with a kinship family and the boyfriend of the aunt kept trying to beat the boy -- the girl out of the little boy so the kid came back into care. The child was adopted and then at eight came out as gay and the adopted family gave him back. So as an eight-year-old came in to care forever. That was -- the kid never had a family again after that. Came out as transgender at 11 and it because really clear by the time the kid was about 11 that this was not a gay boy, this was a transgender girl. And when she was aging out of DC, actually was in my office and she was filling out the paperwork. She was going to move into DEMUS and she was filling out the paperwork for a -- an apartment and there was a question on there that said, next of kin and they wanted legal next of kin. And she burst into tears and she sort of fell to the -- to the floor in my office because there was no one that she could legally put on that paper. And she said to me, and it breaks my heart, all I ever really wanted was a mom. And what she created because there was no legal next of kin, was a group of friends most of whom were also either DCF kids who had aged out or -- but it was a group of transgender girls who
supported each other, who cared for each other, who lived often in the same apartment, often lost their apartments because they were subsidized and they were supporting like eight friends that were living there. And those kids gave up a lot to just be able -- what if -- what if one of her friends was able to be her legal next of kin, to be her family? She is HIV positive. She's still homeless and moving from -- from place to place, not on her meds very regularly because when you don't have a place to stay, you have no place to store them.

And so this is a kid that I think the whole system failed but it's an example of how young ones define -- have to define family in different ways. Homeless LGBTQ youth represent you know five or eight percent of the population but 40 percent of the homeless youth population. And part of the problem with LGBTQ youth when they're homeless is that they can't use the services that are -- that are designed for homeless kids because they can't trust that the providers of those services will protect them from other youth harassing them, and they also can't trust that the providers won't be the perpetrators themselves. So the vast majority of LGBTQ youth who are homeless don't use the services. They get other people to take them home in exchange for sexual favors or whatever, or they create chosen family where they all live together in abandoned buildings and in different places 'cause they can care for their own.

At the other end of the spectrum and I'll just finish with this, that there are lots of people who are moving into the end of their lives who grew up in a society and a culture where you couldn't come out, where coming out was not part of what people
did. And so they may never have formed legal relationships with their partners and the people that have loved them all of their lives and now they are coming into end of life care and they don't have legal relationships with these folks. They may be living together but they may not have -- and then what do they do? You know how do they -- if one is working and one is not, you know or they're both working to support the family and one is ill, what does the other member do? So those are families, you know? Those are families even though the law doesn't necessarily recognize them.

REP. PORTER (94TH): I agree and every sense of the word of family, that is family and family can and should be chosen. It just happens. Even if you don't have all of those extraordinary things going on. I have chosen family.

ROBIN MCHALEN: Right. We all have aunts and uncles and people who are --

REP. PORTER (94TH): People who are not biologically --

ROBIN MCHALEN: That are family, exactly.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Absolutely, absolutely. And it breaks my heart to hear those stories because I don't think it's fair that first of all you can't come out, you should. You should be able to be who you are. And then when you have the courage to do that, we're still trying to put you in a box. So I -- I -- I've heard all the testimony prior to this public hear -- this public hearing as well and I -- I am a firm believer that we do need to address this issue. Because if everyone has to pay in, then everyone should be able to benefit.
ROBIN MCHAELEN: Thank you so much.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. And thank you for the stupendous work that you do.

ROBIN MCHAELEN: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I think that your remarks just -- what resonates with me is that this is a much bigger problem than paid family leave, and it's impacting our state and our communities in a much bigger way. So in some ways it seems overwhelming to me but on the other hand it also brings home the point that this is one small way we can begin to change that. And so I think it was really important for us to think about it in the broadest context of how challenging it is to -- to change society so that we treat everyone fairly, but how well -- how much we can contribute by just in this once instance making sure that we are taking care of people in this program that we're just starting in the State of Connecticut so I think it was extremely helpful. Thank you.

ROBIN MCHAELEN: Thank you very much, Senator. Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Senator. Any further comments or questions? Seeing none, I'd just like to thank you both again.

ROBIN MCHAELEN: Thank you so much.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome. Have a good day.

ROBIN MCHAELEN: You too.
REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. All right. And back to the public list. We have Nancy Sanchez. Nancy, are you here? You are, okay.

NANCY SANCHEZ: Buenas Dias.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Welcome.

NANCY SANCHEZ (THROUGH TRANSLATOR): Buenas Dias.

FRANK SOULTS: My name is Frank Soults. I'll be translating for Nancy.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You need to turn yours on. You have one right in front of you. There you go. On top of the desk. There you go.

NANCY SANCHEZ (through translator): Spanish.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Uno memento, por favor. Can you just put the mic in front of her? Thank you.

NANCY SANCHEZ (through translator): Good morning members of the Labor and Public Employee Committee. Thank you for hearing my testimony. My name is Nancy Sanchez. I live in Hartford and I work as a custodian at Trinity College.

I'm here for myself and other members of union 32BJ SEIU to express my support for the Governor's Paid Family and Medical Leave Bill SB 881 with a few reservations.

I had my children a long time ago when my life and the world were very different. I didn't work then and I could stay home and take care of my babies. My children are now 35, 36 and 41 and they have families of their own but I've entered that stage of life and my brother and I must care for our parents. My father's 80 and he lives my husband and me. My mother is 79 and she lives with my brother in
Hartford. My father has high blood pressure and I've had to take him to the emergency room several times because of his heart. My mother suffers from asthma, diabetes and also high blood pressure.

I worry about what would happen if -- if one of my parents became very sick and I had to stay home with them. I have a good union job. My husband and I have our own house in Hartford but my husband's job is -- he does yard work and doesn't work in the winter. If my parents became sick it would be so hard to take the time off from my job to take care of them.

So the proposal made by Governor Lamont is much better than the situation now when the leave offers no pay at all, which is why I can't take it. But it limits payment to about $600 a week. I'm fortunate in that I make a couple hundred dollars more than that a week. But I'm not so fortunate that I could afford to take home less, especially in the difficult months when my husband doesn't work.

I'm proud to come today to support the work of the Governor and my union also supported it in the election of last year. But I ask you to try to make the Bill stronger like SB 1 and HB 5003, the Bills presented to this commit a few weeks ago. Thank you for listening to my story and for considering the position of so many working people like my family.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Any comments or questions from the Committee? Seeing -- seeing none, thank you again.

NANCY SANCHEZ: Gracias.

REP. PORTER (94TH): de nada. All right. I don't see Representative Phipps so we will continue on the
public list and next up we have Beth Hamilton, Alliance to End Sexual Violence. Good morning.

BETH HAMILTON: Good morning.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Welcome.

BETH HAMILTON: Good morning Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and Honorable Members of the Labor and Public Committee -- Employees Committee.

My name is Bethany Hamilton and I am the Associate Director of the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence. The Alliance is the state's leading voice to end sexual violence and coalition of community-based sexual assault crisis services centers. On behalf of our nine member centers and the survivors that we serve, I want to thank you for the opportunity to share our overall support of SB 881 An Act Establishing Paid Family and Medical Leave while also expressing our concerns about the inclusiveness and accessibility of this proposal.

Our centers provide trauma-informed, victim-centered services to survivors of sexual violence and their support networks, which include a myriad of relationships. Each year The Alliance provides comprehensive sexual assault services to thousands of children, adolescents, and adult survivors, and those numbers have only increased as our society continues to recognize the scope and impacts of sexual violence. As we've learned from the heightened media coverage of sexual violence, survivors' lives are disrupted by trauma and they may need to step away from work to seek medical interventions. The passage of this legislation will provide critical support to survivors and decrease
the likelihood that people may opt-out of necessary care in fear of losing their jobs.

The Alliance also supports policies and practices that create opportunities for the most vulnerable members of our society to succeed. Due to racial and economic disparities, people of color are significantly more likely to have employers who do not provide paid medical -- paid leave and have fewer financial resources to rely on during a personal or familial medical issue. For this reason, we urge you to reconsider the wage replacement formula in SB 881, which will not allow working families to meet their basic needs as it caps benefits at 60% of minimum wage.

Similarly, LGBTQ and gender non-conforming like -- non-conforming people like myself are more likely to experience health disparities and often have less access to financial and familial resources due to our identities, which leaves us susceptible to experiencing hardships when needing to leave work to care for ourselves or our families. Paid Family Medical Leave is an issue that matters to queer families. As a member of the queer community, I urge you to support the Campaign for Paid Family Leave recommendations for an affordable, accessible, and sensible system of leave for all of Connecticut's workforce including an expanded definition of family which is included in SB 1 and HB 5003. This inclusion will positively impact families like mine who often rely on the support of chosen family more than our biological families. All of Connecticut's workers deserve the opportunity to provide care for themselves and their loved ones however they may define their family. As my six-year-old Hadley told me when I recently talked to
her about the need to expand the legal definition of family, it makes Connecticut a better place for all families not just ours. I urge you to support SB 881 with an expanded definition of family to ensure all LGBTQ families are included in a Paid Family Medical Leave system in our state. Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. And thank you for that great testimony. Any comments or questions from the Committee? Seeing none, I say thank you again. Have a great day. All right. Still no Representative Phipps. Next up we have Melinda Johnson. Melinda, are you here? All right. Come on down. Good morning. Welcome.

MELINDA JOHNSON: Good morning Representative Porter, Senator Kushner and the members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Melinda Johnson. I'm Director of Community Engagement and Advocacy for the YWCA Hartford region and I come to testify in support of SB 881, AN ACT ESTABLISHING PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE PROGRAM with a few concerns.

Paid Family and Medical Leave must be a Bill that supports caregivers as they support their families. In the modern day we live in, the social construct of the family has become more complex. If this Bill is to support the families that make up our society here in Connecticut it must be one that is comprehensive, relevant and reflective of complex family structures. I come to you as a West Indian American. I'm the first to be born here in the states. My family came from Trinidad. My roots are in Trinidad and up unto a couple of years ago my great-grandparents were in Trinidad. The matric of our family is Margaret Benjamin. She went by the
name of Joyce and she raised two daughters that migrated here to America and had me, one of six grandchildren -- or great-grandchildren. I had my son two years ago and at that time there was no Paid Family Medical Leave. Thank God I had a supportive supervisor and employer that helped me navigate the amount of paid leave that I did have. Sick time, vacation time, personal, holidays, you name it, she tried to stretch it for me so we could figure out how to make this work. But two years prior to that my great-grandmother passed. As a matric of our family for a family that is predominantly made up of women. The women in my family hold various positions. Some of us are educators, some of us work in the non-profit work sector. Many of us are low-wage workers. Many of us started out in healthcare as CNAs and at the time of her passing or leading up to her passing the question that went around the family was, do we go now in the time that she is in need and she is ailing and she is hurt, or do we wait 'till she passes to go and take care of the business that needs to be taken care of? That's a hard decision for anyone to make and as the matric of our family, she was all of our responsibility. To be there for her comfort, to be there to make sure things were taken care of.

But unfortunately not all of us were able to go. Some of us had just started new jobs or new careers or just had children or whatever have you and for whatever reason we did not have the time to go support our loved one that was in need. And when she passed, I cried bitterly because the woman that had been the staple of our family, the very foundation that we were birthed from was gone from
this earth and I couldn't even go to mourn her because I did not have Paid Family Medical Leave.

The Governor's Bill is a strong one and we acknowledge that it expands Connecticut's FMLA to include caregiving for a grandparent or grandchildren or siblings or child of any age, but the Bill does not include any other individual related by blood or whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship. This is language that is strongly supported by the Campaign for Paid Family Medical Leave and is included in SB 1 and HB 5003 and it's also supported by the YWCA Hartford region.

I don't know how many other families in Connecticut are made up of immigrants that saw aspiration coming to this country but didn't realize the struggle that they would have to face to return home to take care of their loved ones in the case of something like this. My mother always taught us to save up funds for a rainy day. But while we were able to save up funds for a good sun shower, no one could have anticipated this monsoon and with that being said, I urge this table, this group of individuals to consider deeply in the implications of not expanding this language because if it's not expanded then it's not relevant, it's not comprehensive and it doesn't serve all. Thank you for your time.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And thank you for your testimony. Any comments or questions from the Committee? All right. Well I'll say thank you again and feeling Trinidad today though. I have family there as well so glad to see you here and glad to see you doing so well.

MELINDA JOHNSON: Thank you.
REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome. You have a great day.

MELINDA JOHNSON: You too.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Next up we have Deb McKenna. Deb, are you here? Hi. Good morning.

DEB MCKENNA: Good morning.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Welcome.

DEB MCKENNA: Thank you Representative Porter, Senator Kushner and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee.

My name is Deborah McKenna. I am the Secretary of the Connecticut Employment Lawyers' Association known as CELA. I've testified before this Committee on this issue many times in the past. I'm a practicing plaintiff employment attorney at The Hayber Law Firm. I am here today to testify in support of SB 881 with certain modifications. Unfortunately we weren't able to provide live testimony at the earlier hearings on SB 1 or House Bill 5003 but we do believe strongly that there should be a Paid Family Medical Leave program. And there are some very strong components of SB 811 that lead us to support it. What I want to touch on and what I touched upon in the written testimony I provided was the definition of family as well as the inclusion in SB 881 of a private right of action, which is not in the earlier versions of the Bill.

As many of you know, CELA is a voluntary membership organization made up of attorneys in the state of Connecticut who do work for 51 percent of their employment practice is devoted to employee rights. As such, we work with folks who are in these
situations and requiring family medical leave every day in our practice. We support the effort because many of us in this room are going to find ourselves needing time off from work, whether it's for the birth of a child, our own illness or the illness of a loved one.

On a personal note I know, I've given birth to three children. I've been the primary caregiver for both of my elderly parents before they passed and my spouse went through something very similar this fall. It affects everybody. And for that note, the reason that it does affect everyone, I think Representative Porter, your comment is -- puts it all into perspective. If everyone has to pay into the system, it should benefit everybody. And so therefore having an expansion definition of family is really critical.

To those folks who are concerned that this expansive definition will somehow open them up to fraud or an abuse of the system, I would say take a look at the law as it's written because if we limit family, we're really limiting the opportunities for employees in the state.

Sections 31-5111 and 31-51mm, which are currently part of the existing FMLA law and which will included in the proposed SB 881. Both of those sections deal with the certifications employees need to provide in order to be able to qualify for this leave. And so it is not an easy thing. There are a number of documents and you need medical support if it's your own serious health condition. If you're supporting someone who needs you know, a family member needs you to be there for them, and in fact if an employer -- and I'll try to speak quickly. If
an employer challenges that certification they can send you to a second opinion and an employer can get -- the employee can get a third opinion. So there are precautions in place to make sure that the system is not abused. It is really critical that we have an expansion family definition.

Just quickly if I may indulge the Committee. In terms of the Private Right of Action which is included in SB 881 the program is creating an expansion of employee rights, which as employment lawyers we think is a really important thing. I would just point out to the Committee that if you're going to allow Private Right of Action it's important to make sure that employees are able to bring those claims and SB 881 does allow for the claims to be brought into Superior Court, it allows for a full recovery of your losses as well as attorney's fees for bringing those claims. On that note, I will stop and take any questions.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. And I do believe that that right existed in HB 5003 and SB 1 if my memory serves me right, a right to action as far as going to Superior Court?

DEB MCKENNA: So I -- I did look and I apologize. I went back over both of the Bills. I don't believe there was -- there was a right to go court but there was not a right for fees, attorney's fees. And so you know, especially --

REP. PORTER (94TH): I got you.

DEB MCKENNA: When you're talking about employees who are low-wage workers, if you don't allow for a way for attorneys to get paid to take their cases
into court, you're really not allowing them (Crosstalk).

REP. PORTER (94TH): That's what I was missing so thank you for that clarify. Any comments or questions from the Committee? Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I have two questions, and thank you for pointing that out. We -- we were not thinking along those lines and I think that's very helpful and I don't think you know, in the drafting of SB 1 and -- and I would also guess HB 5003, we were not trying to limit that or exclude that so it's helpful to see that that's in the Governor's Bill.

But I do have a question and I don't have an answer to this myself. I don't have a pre-inhibition either way. But in the Governor's Bill I -- he does -- that Bill does incorporate also penalties if you were found guilty of fraud. Penalties within -- that DOL could charge in the administration and I just -- as an appointment lawyer I figured you would have some views on this. So could you comment on that?

DEB MCKENNA: So I think that -- I'm always reluctant to advocate for something like penalties on -- for employees. People sometimes do make mistakes. The system can be confusing. Mistakes happen. That's not to say that there aren't those out there who may try to abuse the system as well, but really we do have -- the certification process is pretty strict. I mean maybe that's an area rather than all the sudden putting penalties on what are most likely low-wage workers. I mean, I know -- and I apologize 'cause I -- I'm not specifically familiar with the section that you're referring to,
but I don't know if it's something similar to with unemployment. You know if you're found to have been overpaid from unemployment, then you have to pay it back. I don't think that -- I mean that -- that doesn't seem like an unfair situation.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Yeah, I believe that's the way the payback was required in SB 1 and 5003, but I think this actually asks that there be additional penalties and I -- I understand that -- you know I tend to agree with you about the -- the concern about people making mistakes but I do know also there's been -- we have heard some testimony and some concern from Committee members about abuse and I think that's why the Governor's Bill incorporated a penalty and I'm -- like I said, I'm not -- I come from a very similar place. I've advocated for workers my whole life so -- but I also recognize that if -- if there's something we can put into a Bill that would actually help you know pass that Bill because people have that concern, I'm willing to consider it. But I would like -- and you don't have to answer this right now, but if you want to take a look at it and then maybe -- maybe that's not the best crafting of it, but if you could think of it from that perspective maybe we could hear from you off line about it.

DEB MCKENNA: That would -- that would be fine. I just want to -- are you referring specifically to Section 11, which talks about --

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Do you have a line number?

DEB MCKENNA: It's 371 is where it starts. An individual or covered worker participating in the program who willfully makes a false statement; and
then it goes on to say you're disqualified for two years.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Yeah.

DEB MCKENNA: And they may seek up to 50 percent of the benefits paid as the result of such misrepresentation.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Yeah.

DEB MCKENNA: I mean you know, it's not even -- even under this provision, unless there's someplace else that's only asking for 50 percent of it back, which is honestly less than what unemployment requires if you're found to have been awarded the benefits in error. They require full repayment of those benefits. So I think that the unbalance you know --

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): You could live with that?

DEB MCKENNA: I think so, yeah.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you.

DEB MCKENNA: You're welcome.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Senator. And thank you again and especially thank you for bringing out the point with the certifications because I think that is important and that had not been mentioned today. But there are checks and balances in place to ensure that court is the administer as much as possible, right? And I think in our Bills we actually give a little more leeway in so far as discretion because as you stated, we're human. We make mistakes. And I don't think that you should be penalized for a mistake but if you are intentionally committing fraud, absolutely. So thank you for making mention of that.
DEB MCKENNA: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): All right. And I think that's it. So thank you. Have a great day.

DEB MCKENNA: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome. All right. I see Representative Phipps has joined us so you are up next. Good morning.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Good morning Chairs, and good morning to the entire Committee. I'm State Representative Phipps of the 100th District. I wanted to talk and do testimony on Bill 811 regarding Paid Family Leave and the definition of a family. So before I start I wanted to dedicate this -- this testimony to the Big Mamma's out and to the Oxy's and to the Pop-Pops. To the -- to the -- the numerous names that are in our community describe loved ones that have taken on the duty of mom and dad and of family, of loving our -- our most closest people in our -- to our hearts when we didn't have a title that neatly fits to what the law typically defines or into what traditional society has said. I think about even in my own family where my grandmother's house in Woodbury, New Jersey, a small town right outside of Cape May, New Jersey and next to Wildwood and the door was literally always open and unlocked. So if something went really wrong or something -- even sometimes when something went really right and you needed a place to stay, those doors were always open. I think about my Cousin Michelle and Aunt Chubby and Aunt Dee. When my Aunt Nell had recently passed away, was working crazy hours in multiple jobs where my grandmother, and I'm the youngest grandchild right? I'll just share that 'cause I still like to brag I'm the youngest one.
When my grandmother really took on -- took on the role of mom for many of my first cousins and I think she -- she did in order to kind of like set the tone for really what is a mother supposed to be. So I think about my time at Woodbury Circle and the south side of Middletown where grew up and she grew up in Woodbury Circle with my mom. And our doors were always open too. And I have a Polish brother, well technically two Polish brothers and a Puerto Rican brother and a Jamaican one and two that are half -- one is half black and -- well two of them are half black and half white. The fact of the matter is, these aren't my -- these are my brothers. They're not my brothers from another mother. They're not my best friend, they're not a close friend. These are folks that we were raised as family each and every single day. And I would hope that if there came a time where someone like my mom or my grandmother and that's exactly what happened with my grandma. There -- grandpa was already gone and the parent and their children, not all of them could do the work, but the grandchildren weren't able to step in. But those -- once again they weren't her grandchildren. They were really her kids. They were the ones that were -- she took to school and made meals for and cooked and cleaned for and they were -- they're -- they're family.

So I would look that as we are working to -- to help protect our families once again and some of them in their greatest need, that we would protect those families. And we would protect a greater definition and show that in the State of Connecticut love is the only defining factor as we define family.

And I'll take it one step further to show just how important this is. In those -- in the brothers and
sisters I talk about, in particular there's two, Glen and Dee. And Dee was my Campaign Manager this year and really, really proud of her for the work that she did. And one day she was talking about her father. I always used to take her out for her birthday. As a matter of fact, we're going to be celebrating her birthday tomorrow. And I didn't -- I was talking to my wife and I didn't think she knew her dad. And my wife hit me and was like, she's talking Stymie Bro. Like that -- in otherward the guy that was always there that I've known since I was in sixth grade that treated me like one of his sons, of course that was the only dad that she was talking about. The only dad that she knew, the only dad that we all knew in many of our lives. I said, I've got to be frank, I didn't have a close relationship with my dad but Stymie was the one that introduced me to hip-hop music and trying to fix -- and I still can't fix anything, but he really took on that role for many of us. And once again, I would hope that there would be room in the State of Connecticut to not only accept but to embrace that definition of love.

And I said if we even wanted to take it even a step further, I said Glen, when he got a call -- when he had to give a call to his biological sister, when his biological father died. So he said, I just wanted to let you know that Pops passed away. And her response was, sorry for your loss. Because that was -- once again, that wasn't someone that she really knew and loved. So once again, I would really truly, truly hope that as we are protecting one another in some of our hardest times, when people are sick and the stress of that is tough enough, that we also don't have to worry about the
bureaucracy and the difficulties and challenges that the State of Connecticut would have as we go and try to protect the ones that we love the most.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Wow! You just put me down memory lane. That was my house. Door always open. Never knew who you were going to find on the couch. (Laughing) My grandma was everybody's grandma and she helped raise us, you know? She was Big Mamma. We didn't call her Big Mamma, but that's what she was. Cooked, cleaned, did our hair, ironed our clothes, taught us everything that we needed to know about being girls growing into young women. So this is not only the right thing to do for me, it's personal. It runs deep. I can -- I can relate to the stories that we've heard here today. I've lived them. So I agree with you 100 percent. This is the thing that we should do. It is the right thing to do and it is my hope that this Committee will come to a consensus around this expanded family definition.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): That's my hope too.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you so much for your testimony.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Any comments or questions from the Committee? Yes, Senator Miner followed by Representative Smith.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): At the risk of snatching you back from memory lane, so I think one of the concerns that people have about not trying to be more specific with the definition is that my life and my adoption of someone who may be extraordinarily significant at a window in time
creates a pathway to eligibility. And then cumulatively over time all those heartfelt connections create the more likely possibility that this program becomes insolvent. So how long have you known Dee?

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Oh, well so I've known her brother since sixth grade, so since I was 10 or -- 10 years old and then she's a baby sister so for 20 -- at least 20.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Through you Madam Chair. If you think about all the people that you've known here, clearly that person has stood out over time as someone ordinarily important and if she called one day and said, this is my situation, I just want you to know. And then you being who I think you are would say, you know what? Let me -- let me be there for you during certain period of that time because I can make it happen. Can you see how this could become problematic? Not problematic in terms of humanity. Not problematic in terms of how we feel but problematic mathematically?

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): I think we already have that mathematical problem in many ways, right? Where we currently allow for folks to take additional time to be able to take care of their families but we don't have a way for those folks to have the resources and assets to be able to really do the work. And that math already is run though math. So I would hope that once again that we -- that we can find a way to be more inclusive, but I would also recognize that I think more importantly these sort of close relationships also build character, so I don't think folks would abuse it in the way that folks would suggest. I think this is going to be a -- a policy
and an asset where once again, folks are going to take care of those that are they closest when they can and -- and they need to.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And so you -- through you Madam Chairman, put out of your mind the word abuse. I'm not suggesting that you would intentionally abuse it or I would intentionally abuse it. I believe that we within ourselves and within some definition that we might cumulatively adopt say absolutely, absolutely. I think the reality gets -- gets more clear that we are going to have a problem. Now I might suggest that the way we limit the potential of that problem by limiting the field of whose a famil -- But I've heard testimony a number of times and when I've reached out to my constituents there are a number of people that have very similar life stories to everybody whose testified and so I am reluctant; this is just me. I am reluctant to try and define something that I think is almost undefinable. Family or something like family.

So now I go to the next thing in problem solving which is, should we consider a lower percentage of wage in an effort to see if this works? And if we do go to a lower percentage of wage, it doesn’t completely cover what people are looking for, that is 100 percent of wages up to $1000, but it certainly lessens the burden. It allows people to make a decision that they can make a car payment, they can do this, they can do that. It's not going to make them 100 percent whole. In some cases it may not make their world go around. Should we try and protect lower wage earners at 100 percent and perhaps drop the top number? These are all things that I'm hoping that we're talking about as we're
talking about that critical issue, which is should we be trying to nail down whose -- who would be in that group of individuals for which I could request this benefit? And that's what I'm asking. I'm asking as we go through the next week or two weeks or three weeks or a month or a month and a half that -- that we consider those things because if the first thing that happens after the passage of this language is that we find out mathematically it doesn't work, now we're going to start changing numbers and I'm afraid the people who need this benefit are going to be looking at less of a benefit, or the people that knew that their exposure was capped at some dollar amount are going to find out that was a pipe dream. There is no cap (crosstalk) exposure. So that's what I'm asking for. Not abuse. Not my definition, our definition, that's what I ask.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Yeah. And I just want to be just mindful that it's -- in many ways I would have -- I would -- I won't say love, but the idea of that sort of like nuclear family or traditional family, I think would be an awesome asset. I think it's been a way where historically tons of wealth has been passed down over and over again. I think there's probably a lot of power in that sort of traditional family. But I also want to recognize the true -- the reality that many of my folks didn't have access to that traditional family. I mean I've been to several weddings that we had the bride and groom jump over the broom to remind us of the fact that not too long ago, just two or three generations ago, maybe four generations in some families, where that sort of wedding and that sort of love wouldn't have even been recognized. So then to understand now
that we don't have those sort of traditional family networks, it's directly related. So I think we have to -- we have to not only recognize the historical reality but recognize that there's current practical consequences because of that -- that history. And doing so, because of that history we have to do this in an equitable way that is going to empower families to move forward in the sort of households and families that we've created for our very survival.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, and through you Madam Chair, lastly. So I get -- I get where you are on the family. Am I correct at where you are on the money aspect is that we should be covering 100 percent of wages up to $1,000 for a period of up to 12 weeks?

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): So I mean I would have to look at the -- the Bill in its entirety. I think -- it's complex and actuary math was not my favorite subject at Bryant when I was in business school and probably I took one class and I hated it. I was like I'm going into marketing and do something easy. So I would -- I would recognize and trust that we have -- that we're going to have to have the math work. With that said I also think that we need to look at this equitably. Those with the lowest earnings should get 100 percent. Those with higher earnings we have to have some sort of scale most likely, but I would really leave that up to -- to this Committee to make -- to make it work and get those details and do my part later on. I would gladly look at the math but the -- the first and foremost is those with the lowest earnings should be kept whole and I think a millionaire shouldn't get 100 percent of that. The fact of the matter is their salary's are
typically done in capital gains and it wouldn't matter. Maybe it wouldn't matter to them anyway. (Laughing) So let's not -- let's be fair when we're talking about this.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And I didn't suggest that and none of these Bills have suggested that so, I do appreciate your time. I appreciate your being here and your input. It is important. And I also appreciate your willingness to think about the math 'cause that too will be important. Thank you, Madam Chair.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Senator. Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108TH): Thank you, Madam Chair and good morning, Representative.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Good morning.

REP. SMITH (108TH): Welcome. Today Senator Miner hit on the point that I was going to address, which is the -- really the trouble I'm having -- I'm having in defining extended family because as we've heard throughout the testimony this morning and a few weeks ago, today's nuclear family still exists but it's not the same. And your comment that -- you know, you know it's all about love Connecticut. You know who do we love? Well we love a lot of people but I don't know unless we tie it into some type of biological nuclear family how we actually define it or how some person in the Department of Labor will be able to define it because you'd hate to see a situation where you have one person filing the application because his or her extended family member whose not really a family member but has treated them like family throughout their life, is
denied the program and somebody else with a similar story is granted the program just because somebody has to make that discretionary choice. And I don't think it's fair to the folks at the Department of Labor or whoever is making that decision to be put in that situation. I think we have to come up with some definition that's real and whether we use the Latin term, in loco parentis, which is to stand in as -- as a parent or stand in as a grandparent or to stand in as a family member, maybe we can define it that way. But I think we're being unfair to -- to ourselves and to the folks are -- will be applying for this who have clearly lost a loved one but maybe denied the program because in the opinion of whoever's looking at it, it's just not enough. Whereas the person at the desk next to him or her feels that it is enough, and you have these congruent or incongruent decisions and it's like where does it go?

So I struggle with this extended family. I know exactly what you're talking -- I think everybody has extended family who you know, clearly are loved members of our family but I think as a legislature we have to be able to define whose covered, whose not, whose in, whose out to make it functional. So that would be my concern, Madam Chair as we go forward and deliberate this. I appreciate everybody wanting to have that ability to care for and -- and spend time with that person that they deeply, deeply love but it could get out of control and it could be -- I'm not -- I'm not -- I don't wish to say abused because I don't think that's -- that's the intent here, but I'm just thinking there has to be some limit. There has to be some definition and I'm hoping we can get there, so.
REP. PHIPPS (100TH): I just want to be just clear that once again we're not talking about someone like a mom, we're not talking about someone like a dad, we're not talking about someone that's like a brother. In these families, that is their mom. That is their dad. That is their brother. That is their sister. Like it is that clear. At my house, when my brothers come over, those are my brothers. When their children come in my house, those are my nieces and nephews. At in grandma's house every single one of us were -- were one of her -- like -- we're not -- we're not -- we're -- I think the problem is that for too long we've tried to be the ones to decipher and decide whose a family and who is not and that had lead to too many of us being excluded. And what I'm asking in this particular case where we have a chance to get it right on the first time, that we go and recognize just how deep and important those -- those relationships are, not just in family and love but I think there's also financial and economic consequences for this -- those are the few connections too.

REP. SMITH (108TH): So let me ask you then because you've lived it. How would you define it?

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): That is a great question.

REP. SMITH (108TH): That's what I'm here for.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): That's a great question and I should have been better prepared for this answer. Um, no. I have been able to answer backwards, but I've not quite been able to work on answering it forward and I will -- I'll get you some additional information for like how to better define it. But I will say this. The sort of relationships that it would take in order to help get someone back to
health in once again both the emotional and economic toll that it would take, that sort of relationship would have to be extremely and ultra-close to take on that sort of role.

So if someone is willing to step up and do it, generally speaking I would trust their decision to do so and would want to empower to do -- to do that. So we can work on the direct definition of how we would define that, but I think the backend part, if someone is going to step up and take on that responsibility, let's -- let's give them the power to do so.

REP. SMITH (108TH): I'm looking forward to hearing your -- your comments off hand, or off record I guess. Thank you, Madam Chair.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Representative and I'll just throw my little two cents in. 'Cause I'm listening to the dialogue, the discussion going back and forth and I'm asking myself you know, what does it matter if Q takes care of D who is like family or if D's biological mother or brother takes care of D. Everyone is paying into the system, right? So everyone should have access to the benefit and if D's biological mother is unfit or not -- just for whatever reason, not in her life and you've been that person to her, financially, emotionally, spiritually, you're connected. It's bigger than love, but I think love covers all of that, right? Why shouldn't you be the one? And that's my question. Why shouldn't you be the one? Why should it matter if you're -- you're meeting the criteria, the certifications that are outlined in this Bill, and then the certifications that will be outlined around this family definition, and it's not going to
be submiss I can promise you that. I will give DOL more credit that that, that it will be defined in a way that is crystal clear. And I think one of the examples you gave is crystal clear. And that's all I wanted to say. Thank you for your testimony. Thank you, Chairs. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Great. Next up we have Stephen Wanczyk-Karp. I think it's Wanczyk, or something like that. Did I get it better the second time? How do you pronounce your name?

STEPHEN WANCZYK-KARP: Wanczyk. Stephen Wanczyk-Karp, I'm Executive Director for National Association of Social Workers, Connecticut Chapter. I'm here today to speak on Bill 7292, which is AN ACT CONCERNING SOCIAL WORKERS. And first of all, I want to thank the Committee for raising -- for raising the Bill.

We believe the intent of Committee in raising this Bill was to cover all social workers who have no language that came out in the Bill, actually done sort of in reverse, it only covers people who are currently licensed and already have title protection. It leaves out baccalaureate social workers. It leaves out master level social workers who are in practice and clinically and it doesn't really at all meet the needs. The purpose of any title protection is first of all, for consumers. To ensure a consumer that if they are being served by a social worker that they know that individual is actually a social worker by training and profession. It shouldn't be up to a consumer to have to -- to research if you will, to find out whether or not the person who is working with them abides by a Code of Ethics. Our Code of Ethics talks about not holding
yourself out in any way that you do not have experienced skills. If you do not have a social work degree you really do not have the skills and experience necessary for professional social work.

To attain a social work degree requires comprehensive curriculum. We have a Dean of School of Social Works here today who can speak more about those requirements. There are seven schools graduating BSWs, 5 schools graduating MSWs and another school that will start classes in the fall. The 5 BSW programs and 2 MSW programs are public universities. The state has invested a lot of money in social work education. We should make it clear then that having done that, that those individuals will be the only ones who can call themselves a social worker.

Over the years we have received complaints from individuals, particularly consumers. We had someone contact us because their social worker by title only was calling them up constantly asking them out for a date. When the woman contacted the agency, the agency said that they had terminated the person's employment so there was no place for that consumer to complain. They weren't a trained social worker, they weren't a licensed social worker. They couldn't go to the Department of Public Health.

We've had social workers complain about state workers who hold the title but not the experience and knowledgebase. We had a school social worker who said to me, I'm going to scream if I have to explain family dynamics one more time. That has dramatically changed. The State of Connecticut is now giving preference in hiring if you if you have social work degrees. And we have talked to many of
those individuals who started their career without a social work degree, who hadn't got the degree and consistently they tell us, I didn't know what I didn't know and I'm much more effective and I understand why I'm doing what I'm doing now. So it really does make a difference.

We want to emphasize that nobody loses their job under this Bill. The Bill does not restrict persons without a social work degree from performing social service tasks as long as they do not identify themselves as a different title. There are many other titles that can be used, including social service worker, case manager, human services worker, caseworker, etc. The Bill simply says if you call yourself a social worker you need to have a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree in social work.

This Bill may actually provide assistance to employers in understanding the differences. It also may make a difference because -- for employer's liability. Degreed social workers practice not only under a Code of Ethics, they practice on a professional standards of practice. And that's something that we would think that employers would be -- would be interested in.

Connecticut's statute already protects the title of numerous other professions including Psychologist, Chiropractor, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Veterinarians, Massage Therapist. Social Work has existed over 100 years as a profession. We're asking that at this time we get the respect that our title deserves.

We have included in my testimony proposed language. We want to emphasize that the language currently in
the Bill simply does not work. It would actually prohibit many individuals with social work degrees from calling themselves a social worker. Our language is asking that the Committee put forward substitute language that will cover all individuals with social work degrees, all BSWs, MSWs and Doctor of Social Work. We also have some proposed language which we believe will carve out some issues that the Department of Children and Family has in terms of defining individuals. Many really find it difficult to find male social workers so they are hiring some folks with other degrees. We would like to assist in the part in being able to meet their -- their gender requirements. At the same time encourage those individuals who don't have a degree to get the degree. We also want to indicate that we would expect that someone who holds the title right now at DCF, we're not suggesting they have to lose their title. We would look at grandfathering those individuals because we know that people are using the title social worker because their employer has given them that title. It's not like people are going out there putting up a shingle wrong and saying I'm a social worker so we don't want to be punitive to the individual but we want to make sure that the employer is utilizing the title properly and giving the individuals the title only who have a social work degree. And I'd be glad to answer any questions that the Committee may have.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Any comments or questions from the Committee? I appreciate your testimony. We did have an opportunity to talk about this issue and I think we're attempting to meet the issue -- you know to resolve the issue that you've raised, so thank you for including substitute
language and I'm sure we'll take a look at it. Feel free to have further conversation with us off line.

STEPHEN WANCZYK-KARP: Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Next on the list, if I can find my list, is Kayla Goldfarb.

KAYLA GOLDFARB: Good afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, ranking and other esteemed members of the Committee on Labor and Public Employees. My name is Kayla Goldfarb. I am a Policy Analyst for the Connecticut Association for Human Services. CAHS is a statewide nonprofit that works to reduce poverty and promote equity and economic success for children and families throughout Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We are primarily here today to support -- to express support for SB 881. I will note quickly however though, that CAHS has submitted testimony in support of SB 5, which will establish a workforce pipeline and job creation task force.

In this testimony we essentially as the Committee to consider ways in which to amplify the potential impact of this Bill by incorporate the expertise of adult remedial education experts as well as two-generation experts into the importance of this task force.

However, back to SB 881, as an organization dedicated to improving the outcomes and opportunities of low-income families in Connecticut, CAHS would like to emphasize that it is absolutely critical that this Committee and the legislature this session pass a paid family and medical leave program that provides for high-wage replacement, especially for low-wage workers in our state.
The United Way's ALICE report has shown us that workers with kids earning well above the minimum wage, you know $19.46 an hour each if two parents working, they're still unable to afford the basic needs of their families, and that's without a family emergency or personal illness that takes them away from their paychecks. Because low-wage workers are those most likely not to have access to paid family leave through their current employment, it is most critical that these workers in our system -- that system provides access for full -- full wage replacement to these low-wage workers. For the 40 percent of Connecticut households who were living below the ALICE threshold, ensuring access to full wage replacement means the difference between barely reaching and then falling below a minimum survival budget for their families. Knowing what we do about the way that exposure to poverty impacts growing young brains and the lifelong impacts that exposure toxic stress can have on health and educational outcomes, future employment outcomes, the State of Connecticut has a real interest, a forward thinking interest in ensuring that our paid leave system acts as a buffer to further economic and security for low-wage families. A real system of paid leave will provide as outlined by SB 1 and HB 5003 for workers to receive 100 percent of their weekly earnings up to a cap of $1000 a week.

On a personal note, as a young professional who recently moved to Connecticut, from Minnesota, far away from my family and my support system I would also like to stress the importance of incorporating an inclusive definition of family into our paid leave system. My partner and I have been together for seven years. We share a home, a cat, finances,
future plans. We are each other's emergency contacts. However, like the more than 80,000 Connecticut residents who live with an unmarried partner, we would not be covered by either the current FMLA law. And while SB 881 does expand on FMLA definition of family, CAHS does recommend that the Committee pass a paid family leave program that meets the needs of all workers by including language that states that any other individual related by blood or whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship.

CAHS essentially respectfully urges the Committee to pass a paid family leave program during this session that provides livable, high-wage replacement as cost effective and is open to inclusive of the needs of all workers. Thank you for your time.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Comments or questions? Thank you. I think one thing that's been great is that everyone who comes up and testifies you have a breath of knowledge about a number of aspects of these Bills, but you also have a personal story so I appreciate that. And yours was a little different twist, so thank you.

KAYLA GOLDFARB: Thank you so much.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Next we have Nina Heller.

NINA HELLER: Thank you Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and Committee members. My name is Nina Heller and I'm the Dean of the University of Connecticut School of Social Work and resident of Hartford, and I am speaking about Bill 7282, AN ACT CONCERNING SOCIAL WORKERS AND TITLE PROTECTION. I hold professional social work degrees, the BSW, the MSW and the PhD and I have
proudly called myself a social worker for more than 40 years. Since 1946 (inaudible - 02:07:59) has been educating practitioners and (inaudible - 02:08:03) 2018 to be a practice through (inaudible - 02:08:08) curriculum. The Yukon School of Social Work has over 8,000 alumni, the majority of whom practice in the State of Connecticut as social workers, many in leadership positions in the state and non-profit agencies and in fact in the General Assembly itself.

We support labors intent to protect the title of social worker, however as currently written the proposed language does not cover all professional social workers who have social degree -- social work degrees at the BSW and the MSW levels which are credited by rigorous standards of the Council on Social Work Education. These accreditation standards and processes are stringent and standard across all states, the majority of whom do provide poor title protection.

At the MSW level student complete 60 graduate credits which include nearly a third devoted to supervised field internships. In this academic year our students provided 35,000 hours in the City of Hartford for internships. In the first year, the foundational year we have a broad curriculum with specialization in the second year.

The first year -- in the second year they can practice with individuals, families and groups or with community organizing and policy practice. These latter two groups do not practice clinical social work and are thus excluded from this proposed legislation. BSWs enter at -- at Yukon enter the program for their junior and senior years and have a
foundational curriculum which prepares them for entry-level generalist practice.

Our major concerns with the Bill as currently written is the exclusive of BSW practitioners from using the title of social worker. BSW graduates complete a robust curriculum which prepares them for professional practice. They earn the right to identify themselves and to be officially recognized as professional social workers.

Secondly, the proposed language would disallow our MSW graduates who do not practice clinical social work from using the title social worker. While approximately 75 percent of our graduates perform clinical practice, 25 percent have chosen concentration in policy practice and community organizing. These macro-practitioners serve the state and its people through work and governmental and nonprofit advocacy groups in many community and police organizations and in the offices of all of our congressional representatives and senators. And many of these alumni with the benefit of their accredited educational degrees represent the best of social work professionals.

Finally, this Bill as written would deny many of my faculty at the Yukon School of Social Work, the very people in charge with educating and mentoring the next generation of the social work workforce of the state from using the title of social work, this despite their social work degrees and their decades of professional social work experience.

We strongly support the title protection of the social workers but urge you to amend languages such as presented by my social work colleague, Steve Karp at the National Association of Social Workers.
Social work is by design a broad profession and in practice and title protection should capture the diversity and the commonality of the profession and its practitioners. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Any comments or questions? Well I would like to say I've been up here at the -- at the LOB at times when students of yours have testified on various Bills and they do a great job and so by extension, I think you do a great job.

NINA HELLER: Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): And I think we're all very proud of the academic program at Yukon particularly around social work. I can tell you we did not intend to write language that would be problematic and so we're very open to the language changes that you would suggest and so we'll meet off line about that.

NINA HELLER: Wonderful.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): And have the right people in the room so that we make sure that everything is understood clearly, so thank you so much for coming in today.

NINA HELLER: Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Next we have Carmina Tess -- Tessitore. She's not here. Okay. Tia Murphy. We've been talking about Tia's up here so much that I don't know, is that Aunt Murphy or is that Tia Murphy?

TIA MURPHY: So it's Tia here. (Laughing)

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Tia, Tia.
TIA MURPHY: Good afternoon Senator Kushner, well Representative Porter, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Tia Murphy. I'm from Bethel and I am the Volunteer State President for AARP Connecticut. We fight for issues that matter most to older adults and their families such as healthcare, family caregiving, and retirement security. We strongly support the creation of a paid family and medical leave policy in Connecticut. And while AARP supports much of SB 881 I would like to express our concern about how legislation makes paid leave available only to spouses and narrowing define family members. I am what social scientists sometimes call an elder orphan, a person over the age of 65 who lives alone and cannot count on nearby family members to provide assistance. I'm a widow, not married, I don't have children, and I don't live close to any of my relatives.

S. 881 outlines a paid family and medical leave program that would not work for me and would not work for many others who live far away from family, who are part of the LGBT community, or who for any number of reasons cannot or do not want to rely on their relatives for care. An estimated one in five adults could become an elder orphan and Connecticut should take this population into consideration when developing a paid leave policy. AARP would like to see a paid leave policy that either has more expansive definition of family or close association such as in SB 1 and HB 5003 that allows potential care recipients to choose who they must trust to provide them with care during a vulnerable time. May I continue? Okay. I'm sorry, I just heard a ding. Sorry.
SB 881 should create an insurance program for workers to offset lost income while they recover from a serious medical condition or provide care to a loved one. AARP believes that Paid Family Medical Leave is a commonsense plan that would allow employees to contribute to and access a limited amount of paid time off from work, and it would provide care recipients with the support that they need to heal and in some cases, to stay in their own homes instead of moving to a more institutional setting to receive care.

AARP's Public Policy Institute estimates that there are 459,000 unpaid caregivers in Connecticut. These caregivers do extraordinary work and they should be able to care for their loved ones without the fear of losing their paycheck or their job. All of our neighboring states, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey and Rhode Island already passed Paid Family Medical Leave programs. AARP urges Connecticut to do the same and in doing so to create a program that protects us older orphans and others who receive care from non-relative loved ones.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. That was perfect timing. Thank you Any questions or comments from Committee members? Well thank you very much for coming in. And another perspective on this issue.

TIA MURPHY: Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Next we have Nora Duncan.

NORA DUNCAN: Good afternoon. I am Nora Duncan. I also am from AARP. I am the State Director and I'm happy to be here today. Obviously you heard our
support for paid family and medical leave and that is not why I'm actually here.

I'm testifying in support of, although I question sometimes what more task forces are going to do, but in support of Senate Bill 5, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A WORKFORCE PIPELINE AND JOB CREATION TASK FORCE. And that's probably something you're be surprised to hear me here about. But what I wanted to talk about was a little project we're working on, which is one that is a -- a manufacturing pipeline but from a slightly different perspective than most people probably hear about. And this case we are helping the state colleges and universities, private high schools and private colleges reach out to retirees from manufacturing to help get them into the classroom. And we're doing this because we recognize the value of manufacturing in Connecticut to our -- to our economy and the drive and the need that has been created by our manufacturers is so great that we're actually not able to help fulfill the needs they have with our current system without bringing more people into the classroom. I'm not going to get into all the details with you but you'll see that we conducted a study of what would be required to be able to get people into the classroom. I wanted to make sure that when we're talking about task forces that are -- going to do work in this area that we are also talking about the instructor aspect of this and not just the student end, 'cause you can't have one without the other. And making sure that when we're looking at what it takes to meet the demands in the 35,000 jobs that are anticipated in manufacturing over the next two decades, that we aren't doing anything that further impedes bringing people into the classroom. Because
that real world experience is so important, sometimes especially in the high schools there are impediments that are set up and we need to make sure we're looking at how to get that real world experience in there. What kind of supervisory roles can be set up. There are people who do this really well and all the time and I just wanted to make sure that folks knew about this project. We're actually having an event on the 26th of March at Goodwin College and in the packets I submitted and with the online testimony you'll see that, so if anybody wants to join us to learn about the kind of opportunities that are available in the classroom, I'd love to see you there.

And we think this is so important to the success of Connecticut's economy that we're dedicating our April bulletin page which goes to all 600,000 or so of our members, to this project so that we can -- it's hard to find retired manufacturers who are thinking about going back into the workforce and into the classroom so hopefully we can use our power to help move that along.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Perfect timing again. You guys --

NORA DUNCAN: We're good.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): You must train on this. (Laughing) Or maybe you're just very experienced too. Other comments or questions from -- I think it's a very interesting program that you talked about and we should definitely look into it. I know my experience with manufacturing and manufacturing workers, it's always interesting to see the kind of ingenuity that is required in a manufacturing
facility that often benefits the facility, so I'm sure it would also benefit the classroom, so.

NORA DUNCAN: And just as a side note. I'll take my extra second here to give a plug. We're also working with Goodwin College to produce manufacturers who are older workers. We just -- we have a 25 percent tuition scholarship at Goodwin College that AARP members can get in a variety of different offerings but one of them is manufacturing. So in 22-1/2 weeks you can get a certificate in CNC manufacturing and really enter the workforce immediately, as well as getting paid back for that tuition and we're really proud to have our first person take advantage of it. It's a 54-year-old female Veteran from East Hartford who is about to wrap up her -- her education to start her second career in manufacturing.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): That's wonderful.

NORA DUNCAN: So both ends of the pipeline.


NORA DUNCAN: Awesome. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Is Karlene Whonder here?

Good afternoon.

KARLENE WHONDER: Good afternoon. Good morning Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and members of the Committee on Labor and Public Employees. My name is Karlene Whonder and I'm a Personal Care Attendant and a member of SEIU, District 1199. I am here to testify in support of Paid Family Medical Leave. I've been a PCA for 11 years. My consumer is schizophrenic and is wheelchair bound. She cannot
use her hands and without me she wouldn't take her medication. I help her live independently and try to support her to achieve creative pursuits so she can live a fulfilled life.

Because I value independent living so much, it pained me when prostate cancer struck my husband in 2015 and he was forced to depend on me for the most basic functions. He had surgery and couldn't work for weeks. I had to change the bed, help him take a bath, help him get dressed. I don't drive and after my husband's surgery he couldn't drive either. It was hard to get him to doctor's appointments and to do the grocery shopping.

My husband had to take unpaid time off from his job and we were forced to live off my salary. My husband needed around-the-clock care so I took an unpaid leave from my former workplace at Job Core and we lived off of my evening job doing PCA work. It was very challenging to single-handedly support my husband, son, and 96-year-old mother-in-law on a weekly PCA salary of $228.75. It was so hard to leave my husband in the evening to go to work while I was so worried about him. I didn't want him to see how stressed I was. I wanted him to be strong.

One of the most challenging aspects of my husband's illness was that he developed incontinence. It was so hard to live off my wages that he had to return to work prematurely, even though he was still incontinent. He was a school math tutor with children who sometimes exhibited behavioral challenges. If he spoke loudly, his lower abdomen would hurt and he would urinate. It was devastating to his sense of self. It was devastating to me.
Because of his lack of a full recovery his muscles still aren't always tight enough to hold it in. When the weather is cold the accidents come back, and sometimes he can't tell when he needs to defecate. Even the other day, he had an accident while he was at work. He apologizes and says he's sorry for not being the man he's supposed to be. I tell him that we will get through it together.

If my husband had access to Paid Family Medical Leave his body would have been able to heal properly. I am happy to see the Governor propose a Paid Family Medical Leave program, but I am concerned that it does not go far enough. Specifically, I think the wage replacement within the Governor's Bill is not sufficient. I would be receiving $180 less per month than what I currently earn. This is a significant amount for me. $180 is the difference between heating my home in the winter or freezing. It is the difference -- the difference between being able to afford internet or buying groceries. I respectfully urge you to dignify us with this this needed human right, thus creating a more equitable culture for all working families in Connecticut. Please support the real Paid Family Medical Leave program in Connecticut. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Questions or comments? Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Hi. Thank you for your testimony. I came in on the tail end of it but I just wanted to thank you for coming before us and sharing such a personal story with us to help us kind of calibrate in our minds exactly what it means when we talk about a full wage replacement, up to $1,000 cap. Even in that instance, everyone is not
going to be covered a full wage but I think that people that need it the most are those that we are trying to assist in their time of need. And I'm sorry that you weren't able -- or your husband wasn't able to get the care that he needed at the time he needed it and it's my hope that we'll be able to get this done this year in -- in ways that will be efficient and effective for families like yours. So thank you for taking the time to be here today to share your story.

KARLENE WHONDER: Thank you for listening.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Wait a second. Before you get up, I have a -- I actually do have another question. It's a little -- it's related to what you testified about but maybe hadn't -- I hadn't been prepared to ask you about this but it made me think about a concern that was raised. You spoke about the work you do and the important work you do to help the client or at that time that you were doing to help the client that was in need and that you had to leave that job. I know there has been some concerned raise by some that the elderly who are in need of a PCA would be jeopardized by not having their PCA -- by their PCA being able to take Paid Family Leave because they rely so heavy -- you know people rely so heavily on their PCAs and I wondered in that instance, what happens when there is -- when you did take time off for a variety of reasons, was there a replacement for you that was able to come in and help that person?

KARLENE WHONDER: Actually what had happened, I was at Job Core at the time and I had the PCA work. So I took time off from Job Core and in the day I was
able to take care of my husband and assist my mother-in-law whose now 99, and then in the evenings while they're resting I was able to go to my PCA job and that was a job I had to depend on to cover --

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you for the clarification 'cause I had not understood that. Maybe I wasn't hearing it correctly or paying close enough attention but I wanted to ask you.

KARLENE WHONDER: That was -- that's my -- that was my former job, the Job Core job.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): The former job with the Job Core. And so in your PCA work, if you were to take time off, would there be someone to replace you in that job?

KARLENE WHONDER: Yes, I sometimes let my Power of Attorney know about it and she will try to find a substitute if I'm unable to do the work.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): And is that the work that you do that brings you into District 1199?

KARLENE WHONDER: Yes.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Okay, great. And so I had heard from some representatives of the union that there are agencies that have replacement workers in the need, once there is a need. Is that -- are you aware of that or has that been your experience?

KARLENE WHONDER: I'm paid by Allied so I -- I don't know of Allied is doing that. I don't think so.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Okay.

KARLENE WHONDER: I think it is the -- my -- my customer's Power of Attorney who has that
responsibility to find someone to substitute just in case a substitution is needed.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Right. Well that would be helpful to know and maybe we can check in with your union or with Allied about that to see what the provisions are for them. That's something I think would be helpful to understand better, so. I know my grandmother had PCAs who took care of her around the clock and there were times when they couldn't be there and others stepped in to fill in for them. But I recognize how important that work is and I appreciate your testimony on it. Thank you.

KARLENE WHONDER: Thank you, too. Thank you for listening. Have a good day.


ANN PRATT: Good afternoon, Senator Kushner. It's so nice to say that word. (Laughing) And members of the Committee. My name is Ann Pratt. I'm the Director of Organizing at Connecticut Citizen Action. We're an organization that has been around for 47 years and committed to putting people first and feel like this Bill, Senate Bill 881 is one of those Bills and we are here largely to support Senate Bill 881.

We embrace many of the suggested changes and improvements that have been stated previous to me including wage replacement improvements and the change in definition of family. I particularly resonate with the -- Tia Murphy's testimony about being an elder orphan. While I'm not that yet, by the time -- a couple of years from now I could see that that would be a big issue, so I really
appreciated that testimony. Just wanted to amplify that.

I'd like to spend my time here actually speaking more to the point about this program being publicly administered and the proposal for any kind of private health insurance option with this -- this plan. And I just want to lift up, if the Committee has not already done so, to take a good look at the Connecticut Medicaid program and its efficiencies that have been gained, and in particular prior, many of you might know, to 2012 the Medicaid program was indeed run by managed care private insurers and we had the ninth highest enrollee crossed in the nation at that time. It was also managed with a lot of inefficiencies. There was a lot of problems for enrollees to get access to care. And the outcomes were not good. In 2012 as you probably know, Connecticut decided to remove private insurers and instead have a fee -- fee for service program of administering the program. Since that time administrative costs for Medicaid have decreased by 14 percent. We are now a state that leads the nation -- leads the nation in the lowest enrollee member costs. This is also at a time where most Medicaid programs across the country are run by private insurance and managed care companies. Connecticut is one of the, I think one of twelve in the state. So here we have an example where having a program that's you know, run without private insurers, has increased deliverables, has increased service and decreased costs. The Medicaid program here has a 3.2 percent administrative cost. The national average again with private insurers running those programs run up to be about 12 percent. So it -- it's a program to look at the importance I think
of having something like this program be publicly run. And those administrative costs have actually been controlled even when there's a huge increase of close to 500,000 enrollees in Medicaid. So once again the savings are significant in terms of enrollee costs by numbers. So I just wanted to lift up that as an example of the importance of maintaining our programs be publicly run and not including private insurance companies in administering such an important program for families in state.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Any comments or questions? Okay, great. Well thank you very much for being here.

ANN PRATT: Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): And those are definitely statistics we want to look at. Next we have Merrill Gay. Oh, there he is. Hello.

MERRILL GAY: Hello. Senator Kushner, members of the Committee. My name is Merrill Gay. I am the Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, a statewide coalition of over 100 organizations that care for and about young children in the state. I want to start by saying how happy I am that there is a Governor's Bill Unpaid Family Leave, and that there is in his budget provisions to cover the start-up costs. But that said, I think that a couple of things you've already heard a lot of people talk about today, the need for higher wage replacement, particularly for lower wage workers, and the more inclusive definition of family are very important and I hope that you guys will amend this Bill or go with SB 1 as a better approach to this.
I always think back to when I first heard about the Paid Family Leave proposal, was a day when Maddie as a new intern came and faced the trial by fire in front of our alliance members who were acting much more like small people than child advocates and gave her a very skeptical hearing at that meeting. And I remember also that earlier in that day I had gone to Dunkin Donuts and picked up a coffee from a very pregnant woman behind the counter and as I thought - - as I heard Maddie's presentation I kind of created my Dunkin Donuts test, which is would this proposal work for that woman who was going to give birth sometime, you know in the next month? Would she -- if this law existed, would she be able to take time off with her baby? You know you've heard very eloquently from different groups that have issues or who are thinking about this from the perspective of care for seniors, the LB -- LGBTQ community, communities of color. We look at it particularly for -- through the lens of families and young children and what we know is that the current Family Medical Leave Act doesn't help lots of families. We have lots of hourly workers here who don't get maternity leave, don't get vacation time, who really only get sick time because this legislature passed a law requiring a week of sick time just a few years ago. Those families really need the protection of a system that lets them take time off so that they can bond with their baby and take care of a sick child. Those -- for those families higher wage replacement is really critical. If you're working at $15.00 an hour you don't have leeway in your budget and under this Bill it would only -- you'd only get to full wage replacement if you were at $15.00 an hour. If you're at anything more than that, you're not getting full wage replacement. And what we know is
that the -- the actual cost of living in Connecticut in substantially higher than that. It's more like $38.00 an hour for a family of four. And so we need to make sure that we take care of folks by providing higher wage replacement. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Are there comments or questions? Representative Winkler.

REP. WINKLER (56TH): Yes. Have you carried the math out into the you know, $1,000 and $1,200 a week people?

MERRILL GAY: So at $1,000 a week you're at $52,000 a year. What we know from the United Way's ALICE report is that for a family of four your cost before childcare are about $56,000-$57,000.

REP. WINKLER (56TH): I apologize for not being clear. Did you -- have you figured out what the reduction would be under the Governor's proposal from their base income to whatever they would be paid under Family Medical Leave?

MERRILL GAY: My understanding is that under the Governor's proposal the cap is $600. So that -- that would you know --

REP. WINKLER (56TH): So it would be over a third?

MERRILL GAY: Yep.

REP. WINKLER (56TH): Thanks. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. I also -- I do similar research when I leave here. I often ask people like at Dunkin Donuts, like how would this $15.00 minimum wage affect your life and it's very interesting. It's a good way to find out whether what we're doing here is real for people so I do
appreciate your comments about the woman who was pregnant. I also was fortunate to testify with -- or do a press conference with a woman who was pregnant in Middletown a few weeks ago or few months ago and now we're friends on Facebook and I get to see her baby because she already delivered the baby, and how important this would have been for her if we had already done this. So I appreciate the same kind of -- I have the same kind of approach to the legislation, so thank you very much. Any other comments? Okay, thank you. I understand Carmina is here? Carmina Tessitore.

CARMINA TESSITORE-HERSCH: Good afternoon.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Good afternoon.

CARMINA HERSCH: My sir name has changed now to Hersch.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Oh, that's easier to say, Hersch. But was it -- was it Tessitore?

CARMINA HERSCH: It was, yes.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you, go ahead.

CARMINA HIRSCH: Thank you. So I a Carmina Hirsch. I currently reside in Milford, Connecticut. I stand in support of SB 1, HB 5003 and the Governor's Bill SB 881; all aimed at creating a Paid Family Medical Leave program in Connecticut.

I have been a small business owner in this state since 2013 and currently employ two staff members — one full-time and one part-time. My business serves clients predominantly in the New Haven and Fairfield counties with family matters including divorce and child custody issues by providing litigation or mediation services.
Prior to owning my own business I was involved with a family business in this state by my mother who owned two Dunkin' Donuts franchises for over 23 years and she employed you know, dozens of employees annually.

As a business owner in Connecticut, I Paid Leave because the program allows for employee contributions by a small percentage of payroll to be set aside like a savings account and drawn upon if and when a qualifying factors occur for up to 12 weeks in a 12 month period for caregiving and medical leave. My understanding is the Governor's Bill also allows for an extra two weeks for pregnancy related complications. This enables an employee to take leave to care for an elderly or ill parent or spouse, to care for one's self, to care for a newborn or sick child and employers contribute nothing per employee into this fund.

Self employed workers or self-proprietors may also take part in the program. When an employee must take leave under the program, the employer does not pay the employee for the time they are not working. If needed those funds can be reallocated to hire temporary help during an employee's leave period, which ensures no increase to business overhead costs while still meeting the demands of clients/customers. This fund follows the employee. Should an employee leave an employer, they do not lose the amounts already accumulated, and there is no added paperwork on the part of the employer to effectuate this transition. The program aligns with our values and morals as a business and as a society.
My career success is inextricably linked with my and my staff's life and ability to balance work life and family life. We want healthy, happy, employees who are mentally present at work doing their jobs well. When a qualifying event occurs where an employee needs time to care for a sick spouse, or parent, or child, or are suffering from their own illnesses, forcing them to work simply so they can pay their bills is cruel.

As a taxpayer and resident of Connecticut I support paid leave because the current state of Federal FMLA doesn't work for most working families. The majority of workers are either ineligible or cannot afford to take unpaid leave provided by the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act. Just 17 percent workers, including just 6 percent of low-wage workers have access to paid leave through their employer under the Federal program.

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. We must pass paid leave to stay competitive in our region and attract and retain workers in Connecticut.

Paid leave benefits Connecticut's economy and businesses. Without paid leave, workers fall behind on bills and medical expenses, are more likely to file for bankruptcy or end up in foreclosure which negative impacts the economy. Paid leave improves worker retention and saves employers expensive turnover costs. After more than ten years of paid leave in California, employers overwhelmingly report positive or neutral impact on their business.
I was recently at an event hosted by the Connecticut Campaign for Paid Family Medical Leave where Congressman -- Congresswoman Rosa Delauro was present and she spoke very passionately on the topic. Her book, The Least Among Us, Waging the Battle for the Vulnerable has a quote I'd like to share. "It bears repeating that the reason companies do not feel free to poison us, sell us spoiled meat, lock our daughters up in 9th floor sweat shops with no fire escapes, employ our underage sons in coal mines, force us to work 13 hour shifts without overtime or a break or call in private Army's to fire rifles at those of us who dare strike for higher wages is not because companies experienced a moment of Zen and decided to evolve, no. They were forced into greater accountability and social concern by the legitimate actions of a democratic government. In otherward, if we depend on good will, we are all screwed."

I hope Connecticut lawmakers will vote favorably this year to make Paid Leave and Medical Leave a reality for all Connecticut workers. It is good public policy and the right thing to do. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you and thank you for reading that quote. I could hear Rosa in my head while you were saying that. (Laughing) I love the ending.

CARMINA HIRSCH: There are a lot of great quotes but that one took (crosstalk).

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Definitely have to find time to read her book and I admire her so. But I -- I do want to thank you because your voice is the voice we haven't heard up here yet and -- but I have heard it a lot when I talk to people in my district
and talk to small businesses and their concern about how do you provide for employees when you can't afford to as a small business, take it out of the -- sometimes very small amounts of money you are getting by on and so the idea of having an insurance program that is paid for by the workers themselves really resonates with small businesses.

We did -- we have had some folks raise questions about how you would handle replacement, you know where would you find a skilled worker to be -- replace someone on your -- you know you mentioned you only two employees. How would you go about replacing someone when they're out taking advantage of this leave. And could you address that?

CARMINA HIRSCH: Sure. So there are a myriad of what we call temp agencies throughout the state. I for a brief time when I was a student in New York actually worked for one myself and they would place me in different companies for a few days, few weeks. You know, one person I remember had gone out on maternity leave and you know, train you and so that you can ensure that the business still functions. And certainly sometimes you know, full-time opportunities arise by having that temporary placement. So it's not that you know you're dipping into overhead by paying an employee because they're not working and also paying someone to work. You're not. You're just reallocating those sources to that temporary help and then when your employee an return, it goes right back to the employee.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): So I don't know during the time that you've been an owner of this small business, have you had employees who had to take off
without pay during the time you've been running your business?

CARMINA HIRSCH: Not without pay because I ensured she was paid. I did have an employee who became pregnant. She also happened to be a relative and needed to take some flex time because of some complications and I ensured she was paid, was able to do some you know, work outside of the office if possible and also paid for her maternity leave time. But I don't know that that's you know, something other companies would do and that's the concern I have is you know, if you're working for someone you are not given the opportunity, how do you pay your bills? How do you make ends meet?

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): And some businesses might not be able to afford to do it.

CARMINA HIRSCH: Certainly. Right.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): So I think those are the same concerns that we share and I have to say I really appreciate you coming up here and taking the time to testify on something that you believe is right even though you see it from a different perspective than the employee and I -- we haven't had as many small business owners as I would like to speak up here so that's really appreciated. Other questions or comments? Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Senator Kushner and thank you for your testimony. I just want to go back and touch on something that you said because you've actually addressed the issue of what would you do, right? And you use an example of a temporary employee, which brought to mind the question. The -- the funds that you reallocate for
the temp, is there a savings in that? Are you paying the temp? Are you actually saving, and I say that because most times you're hiring a temp at --

CARMINA HIRSCH: Right.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Minimum wage, maybe a little more depending on experience but it's usually less than what you're paying you full-time employee or your part-time employee in your instance.

CARMINA HIRSCH: Sure.

REP. PORTER (94TH): So can you speak to that a little bit?

CARMINA HIRSCH: You know I don't know what the wages would be if you were to hire a temporary employee through a temp agency for example. I haven't actually had to do that because I did give my employee some flex time and we were able to continue working together. From what I remember when I did it you know, 20 years ago, 15-20 years ago it was at a very reduced rate. The agency actually took a percentage and then I was given the remainder. So I don't know what the you know, going rate is in Connecticut today, but I would imagine there might even be a cost savings there.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you for that. Because I've also temped prior to getting a job and actually the last job I had and there was a bump in salary when they hired me on permanently.

CARMINA HIRSCH: Sure.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And there was a savings in using temps so I just wanted to kind of make that point as well that there's actually some cost
savings that can be associated with replacing an employee when need be.

CARMINA HIRSCH: Right.

REP. PORTER (94TH): So -- and like Senator Kushner said, thank you for coming down. We haven't heard from enough small business owners who support this so it has been quite refreshing to hear your testimony today.

CARMINA HIRSCH: Thank you. I would like to say I had wanted to come on prior hearing dates when the other Bill was presented but I was stuck with work, otherwise I would have been here and I think I submitted written testimony during those occasions.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay. Well we thank you for that.

CARMINA HIRSCH: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I just want to say one other thing which is what's also really great about your testimony is, I've been talking to a lot of small business people about this and some people who actually do just like you, have paid employees when they've been out because they feel the importance of doing that. And sometimes they use that as an argument like we shouldn't have Paid Family Leave. Look I pay for my employees when they are on sick leave but we know that the quote comes back -- that there are many good employers out there who do take care of their employees.

CARMINA HIRSCH: Right.
SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): People like you who really you know, represent the best values of our state, but not everybody is like that so we need a Bill, so I appreciate it. I wanted to come back to that quote. It was great, thank you.

CARMINA HIRSCH: Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Madam Chair.

REP. PORTER (94TH): All right. Any further comments or questions? Seeing none, we'd just like to thank you again for your time today.

CARMINA HIRSCH: Thank you so much.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You have a great day.

CARMINA HIRSCH: You too.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. Lindsay Farrell. Good afternoon.

LINDSAY FARRELL: Good afternoon. I am -- I'm Lindsay Farrell. I am the State Director of the Working Families Party here in Connecticut and I am here to testify in favor SB 881 for Paid Family and Medical Leave. I want the Committee for holding this hearing today.

In the interest of -- I'm not going to reiterate many of the arguments that we've heard at this hearing and the previous one about why this is so crucial but I do want to touch on some policy specifics that we really want to emphasize and lift up. And I'll start with previously one of the Representative had asked about whether or not any other state has the option for employees to opt-out of the program. No other state does that, just because you know of the economy and scale of
insurance makes the program less stable by doing that so nobody else does.

Some things that I want to emphasize, we applaud the Governor's Bill for having universal job protection and for the universal employer size of one employee or more. That is really, really important to make sure that people are actually allowed to take the leave that they have been paying in for.

We also support an inclusive definition of family. I think that -- I think that we can get there on that -- that issue, but you've heard a lot today about why that is so important to folks. We want to make sure that the benefit is portable from job to job so that once the employee is vested in the program that they -- if they have the ability to use the leave, if they start a position and they don't feel like they will be punished for advancing their career or something like that.

We want to make sure that the program is publicly administered where there is some nervousness around the language of a public entity running the program. You know that is an important conversation to have but we do want to make sure that for several reasons, we want the program administered by accountable public employees who have the proper transparency and oversight. That just will make it a stronger program.

And we do recommend against any private opt-out options for employers to provide their own program. That being said we were happy to see in the legislation that the employees got to democratically decide whether or not they wanted to select a different benefit. We recommended flushing that
language out a little bit more. With that I'll make myself available for questions.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Well thank you for your testimony. Any comments or questions? Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): So there have been -- I'm glad you addressed the issue of inclusive definition of family and there's been questions raised at previous hearings about this issue and I wonder, the words that are in SB 1 and House Bill 5003, I had thought how to say that but -- I know I like the single digit Bills, they're easier. But I wondered if you could comment a bit on that language close association and whether that's used in other states and how it's been implemented?

LINDSAY FARRELL: Sure. We -- I mean would like to use the broader language so that the Bill is inclusive through the -- we can add additional language to make sure that this is done through the regulatory process so that we can address some of those concerns around abuse or fraud that have been raised. They are -- they just adopted this in New Jersey is my understanding so, you know like many of the other provisions of these proposals we have some experience and some expertise to drive -- draw from.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Can you remind me? How long has New Jersey had Paid Family Leave? Roughly, you don't have to have something --

LINDSAY FARRELL: I think they implemented not -- not quite a decade ago but they have several years under their belt.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Well -- and I really I didn't know the answer to that question so I was a
little bit nervous about asking, but I think that's helpful to know because if they have that kind of a definition then --

LINDSAY FARRELL: Right.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Then we can look to them as knowing what they're doing.

LINDSAY FARRELL: They recently passed legislation to expand the benefit and the coverage of their program because it has been sustainable and so effective in New Jersey.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): That's helpful to know. Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome, Senator. The need to expand the benefit, can you expand on that?

LINDSAY FARRELL: They -- when the legislation passed some years ago, I think they were the second state to adopt it so you know as often happens with these kinds of issues they went with a much weaker wage replacement and coverage and all of those variables that -- that we are looking at in the legislation. And what they have found is that because the program is so popular and because it was you know, it was sustainable they have gone back to past legislation that expands the wage replacement and I believe it also expands the amount of time available to workers.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Wow, that sounds like success to me.

LINDSAY FARRELL: Yes, California has also done the same thing.
REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay. So New Jersey and California.

LINDSAY FARRELL: Yep. The two oldest programs.

REP. PORTER (94TH): All right. Well thank you for that. Any further comments or questions from the Committee? Seeing none, we thank you.

LINDSAY FARRELL: Thank you. Have a good day.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome. You as well, thank you. Next up we have Patrick Comerford. Did I mess that up? Is that Tom said?

PATRICK COMERFORD: You did great.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you and welcome. The floor is yours.

PATRICK COMERFORD: Thank you. Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, Members of the Committee, my name is Patrick Comerford. I am from New Haven, lifelong resident of Connecticut and I am here testifying in general support of the concept of Senate Bill 881, but I do so with great concerns over the exclusion of many LGBTQ folks in this Bill. I am here to urge the Committee to support this Bill only if it includes amended language of the expanded family definition found in Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 5003 that I testified in support of previously.

Paid Family Medical Leave is undeniably a queer issue and yet the Governor's Bill is not fully inclusive of the diversity of family structures in our state and lacks full wage replacement, both of which are important to the LGBTQ community as well as other marginalized groups. According to Center for American Progress, 42 percent of LGBTQ people say they've needed to take time off work to care for
a chosen family member compared to 31 percent of non-LGBTQ folks. LGBTQ couples raising children are also twice as likely to have household incomes near the poverty line compared to their non-LGBTQ peers and single LGBTQ folks are three times more likely to live near the poverty threshold as their non-LGBTQ peers.

And earlier something I heard about we have to choose between the wage -- full wage replacement and inclusive family definition, that those two groups will somehow compete, it's important to remember that many of those groups, that is an overlapping group of folks and in many cases it is economically marginalization that forces people to create varied structures of family. So I really want to push -- I'm disappointed the folks who are making that argument aren't here because I really want to push back on that and make that really clear.

Lack of access to paid family leave system leaves many marginalized communities in particular without access to the support and safety network that many rely on. When I came out, I also relied on chosen family. And the necessity of creating a chosen family and relying on them for care or financial support is common in my community. Many queer folks simply do not have the privilege of biological family to care for them, to support them and to have their back in the most basic of ways.

I also want to push back on this idea that there's like we all have an extended family of people we generally love. Yes, absolutely. We are talking about folks and families who have no one else to rely on. That is a really different thing. And so the argument of like, oh well we all have people we
love, yes. We're talking about communities where biological family is not present and is in many cases a danger and this is -- this is far more than extended families we just love and -- and we want to take care of if we had -- if we could.

Today at the age of 37, I am not married, I do not have children and research shows that I am not alone in this and that LGBTQ adults are significantly more likely to be childless and living without a partner than non-LGBTQ older adults. So many in our community come to depend on the strong relationships we make with chosen family, particularly later in life and the reality is that we will need care and need to rely on one another when the time comes.

You've heard about the other states that have passed Paid Family Medical Leave and several existing federal and state paid family leave and paid sick day laws that show that an inclusive family definition provides important protection without leading to a significant increase in usage or uptake.

I urge the Committee to support 881 only with amended language of expanded family definition to be inclusive of LGBTQ families and families that don't share biological and legal ties. Don't leave Connecticut workers behind who aren't lucky enough to fit into the dominant narrative of what a family looks like. Thank you so much for your time.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And thank you for your time and your testimony. Any comments or questions from the Committee? Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I wanted to thank you for really listening to the other questions and the
other folks who were testifying because it is really helpful to get your feedback on things that have already been said, so I appreciate that because sometimes folks can't do that, so glad that you were able to.

PATRICK COMERFORD: Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And I too thank you for that because you made a very sane point that it is bigger than extended family and people simply love and would like to be able to take care if we could. These are people that you are connected to spiritually, economically, like you depend on them like you would a biological family member. And the point that I made earlier I'll just make it again. It doesn't matter to me if it's your biological mom who hasn't been in your life or if it's actually someone you consider a mom because she's been taking the responsibilities that a mother would take in caring for you. And it's so funny because there was a conversation outside earlier. One of the advocates was telling me, you know what about my instance? You know I have a dead-beat dad. He ain't never did nothing for me. But according to this Bill I can take care of him. Now ask me do I want to? How about the guy that has actually given his blood, sweat and tears, his financial support, emotional support, spiritual support, raised me like a daughter. That's who I should be able to take care of. So I wanted to make that point as well because this -- if you flip it, there's another side to this. And I know there's plenty of people unfortunately that can state that testimony. What about the dead-beat parent that wasn't there for me at all? I can actually take care of him if I want
to and I'll say it's the right thing to do you know? I will say that. But just wanted to put that out there as well. This goes both ways and I think that all things should be considered, especially when all people have to pay into this system. They should definitely have the benefit so thank you again for taking the time to be here with us today and for sharing your views.

PATRICK COMERFORD: Thank you so much. I appreciate that comment 'cause for so many young LGBTQ folks, that is the situation where there is a parent who is absent or has rejected them. They would be able to take care of them but not the folks who stepped in in a life or death matter for many folks.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome. And -- and I a that mom to some and that's why this is important to me. I have two biological children and one biological grandchild, but I can't tell you how many sons and daughters I have that call me mom and how many young ones that call me grandma because I'm there in that capacity and I thank God that I'm able to be. But I mean these things need to be considered so thank you again.

PATRICK COMERFORD: Thank you so much for your time.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome. You have a good day.

PATRICK COMERFORD: You too.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. Next up we have Gretchen Raffa. Is Gretchen still in the room or did she -- oh, there she is. Welcome, welcome, welcome. You're next. And the floor is yours.

GRETCHE RAFFA: Thank you.
REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome.

GRETCHEN RAFFA: Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and members of the Labor Committee. My name is Gretchen Raffa, Director of Public Policy, Advocacy with Planned Parenthood of Southern New England testifying on Senate Bill 881 AN ACT CREATING A PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE PROGRAM. As advocates for reproductive freedom we must consider all aspects of a person's life including those that may affect their economic stability. While we largely support the Governor's Paid Family Medical Leave proposal we do have concerns about the inclusiveness and accessibility of his proposed program. We strongly recommend this Bill be amended and expand the definition of family to the more inclusive definition which is included in SB I and HB 5003 so it will includes all families regardless of who they care for or depend on for care. Planned Parenthood is also a member of CT Equality, a statewide LGBTQ+ advocacy coalition. It's essential that family leave policies include chosen family members. Due to cultural, economic, and social forces the overwhelming majority of households today depart from the nuclear family model of a married husband, wife, and their kids. Connecticut workers need an inclusive paid family and medical leave system that will allow them to take care of their extended family and loved ones who don't share biological or legal ties.

Families are constantly evolving in our state and across this country. They take many forms including blended families, single-parent families, LGBTQ families, chosen families and multigenerational families. Yet public policy has not kept up with what American families look like today. Therefore,
it is important to recognize that even with marriage equality for same sex couples, we must ensure that policies include individuals who choose not to marry, like myself; or who rely on extended family members or families of choice for care and they cannot be excluded from workplace laws. In its current form SB 881 excludes many families including non-marital partners and we respectfully request the committee amend this Bill to be fairer and more inclusive of the diversity of families in our state. At Planned Parenthood 86 percent of our patients self-identify as single with only 8 percent identifying as married and an expanded family definition is critical to them being able to benefit from this program.

The simple fact is LGBT -- the LGBTQ community unanticipated life challenges that can often be daunting. LGBTQ workers and families are often struggling with lack of government recognition depending on what state you live in, social intolerance, economic injustice which leaves the higher rate for poverty, employment discrimination, and laws and policies that fail to support workers with health and caregiving needs.

Research has shown that LGBTQ Americans, especially older LGBTQ adults are more likely than population at large to rely on families of choice when they need care or help in an emergency. And research documents clear health disparities within the LGBTQ community including higher risk for certain cancers, HIV/AIDS, diabetes and other chronic conditions.

We believe at Planned Parenthood this is a reproductive and economic justice issue for all families, including queer families. This is why we
also recommend high wage replacement and are concerned with SB 881 wage replacement formula as it will not allow workers to meet their basic needs and recommend higher wage replacement as in Senate Bill 1.

Personally as a 45-year-old queer, non-married woman with no children, having a more inclusive family definition would personally benefit me and my family because it would include people outside my blood family to also include my chosen family. The chosen family I am grateful for who has served as caregivers for me when I was ill and in every sense of the word, they are my family and who I will rely on for care, especially later on in my life. I also play of role of Auntie to many of my close friend's children and I'm there in a caretaker role when their parents are unable to and I'm hoping that one day they will be there to care for me as well.

Connecticut has an opportunity to be a leader, a national leader on this issue and pass one the strongest, most inclusive Paid Family Leave policies this year. I'll wrap up just reminding people that the expanded family definition can be figured out through the regulatory process. I know there's been questions and we have guidance. We can actually look to the Federal Government and how the DOL has regulated this in the Federal government. So we just urge the Committee to support SB 881 only with amended language that the campaign is recommending. Thank you so much for your time.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Gretchen and thank you for your testimony. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I know you had to rush through and wrapped up quickly there about I think
the importance of what you were about to say and what you concluded with is how we will be able to make this happen through regulatory means and I think that would be helpful if you have ideas and suggestions. We could talk about it off line but I do think that is sort of where we’re thinking as well because I know that everyone involved, the Governor's office and Senate leadership and House leadership, certainly Robin and myself are looking to make sure that we are approaching this from an inclusive position so I think that we just have to find a way to make it real and make it work. Thank you.

GRETCHEN RAFFA: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And I also think we need to find the courage to make it work because we will be a national leader and I love the sound of that. We've lead on so much but we've fallen behind and in order to catch up we really need to take a hard, long sprint this time and I think in doing this, making sure that the wage replacement is adequate, right? We're not giving away riches. And to make sure that it's inclusive, that every single person that pays into this program will have the benefit of the program if and when they need it because that's the other thing. We will have people that won't even use this program, just like my car insurance. When I think about how much money I've pumped into that insurance company and not had anything come back in return, I'm like why am I doing this? Oh, that's right because one day you might have an accident, right? So I need and I hope that as people listen they really expand -- they expand their desire you know, to understand. Because it's not everyone's experience. I understand that. But
I mean we -- we need to be more compassionate and more understanding when it comes to people that don't look like us or act like us or talk like us or have a family like us. They're people too and human and this is a human issue. This is about humanity and this is about dignity so it's not just about the Paid Family Leave aspect of the Bill. It's about building people up, not tearing them down when we need -- when they need us the most, so thank you for sharing your story today, Gretchen. I appreciate all the work you do.

GRETCHEN RAFFA: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome.

GRETCHEN RAFFA: So appreciative to the Chairs.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. Have a good day. I'm sorry, don't go nowhere. Representative Winkler.

REP. WINKLER (56TH): For my education, I know that the Department of Labor has a assumed the parental role rule so that there doesn't have to be a blood relationship and there doesn't have to be even a formal relationship. Is there a similar rule that I'm unaware of concerning partners that have not any legal connection?

GRETCHEN RAFFA: Are you talking about the federal government or the state government?

REP. WINKLER (56TH): Right. The Department of Labor. You mentioned the --

GRETCHEN RAFFA: Yeah.

REP. WINKLER (56TH): Department of Labor had rules. I haven't seen the rule so assume the role of a
parent is the way they put the -- how do they phrase the rule concerning partners who have you know, had no legal connection?

GRETCHEN RAFFA: The biggest difference between the like we are recommending in Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 5003, is really just the word affinity which is in the federal definition so the federal definition says related by blood or affinity to the person. So that's the biggest difference. And in their regulations, and they have a FAQ on-line document that really spells out what some of those examples of those relationships might be.

REP. WINKLER (56TH): All right.

GRETCHEN RAFFA: Yeah.

REP. WINKLER (56TH): And is -- is there a judgement call at some point in the process?

GRETCHEN RAFFA: I think what's going to -- I don't work for the Connecticut Department of Labor so I'm going to speculate that in the regulations there will be guidance and people will have to apply just like they apply for FMLA with a form and there will be a check box and you will upload -- I'm kind of speculating right? Because we haven't established a system, but upload proof of medical illness and relationship to the person you might be asking to take care -- time off for. And we look forward to working with the Department of Labor -- Labor on kind of the regulations to ensure that the process is in place to be as accurate and easy for the employee to apply, but also will follow the guidance under the proposed family definition.

REP. WINKLER (56TH): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

GANNON LONG: I'm doing great and it's wonderful to see you both up here. Thank you for chairing this Committee and thank you all for being here. It's nice to see you both as well. My name is Gannon Long. I'm a resident of Frag Hallow in Hartford. I'm here for the opportunity to testify in strong support of the Paid Family Leave Bill in Connecticut. It's time for a real Paid Family Leave Program that's truly accessible, covers all workers regardless of who they care for or who they depend on for care. Connecticut has an opportunity we've talked about to be a national leader. We want to pass one of the strongest and most inclusive Paid Family and Medical Leave policies and other folks have talked about those clause being in association with employees equivalent of a family relationship from New Jersey.

So the Bill that we're here to talk about from the House is 5003 and from the Senate is Bill 1. The thing I'm here to say, and I know a lot of you are supportive of this concept, is that chosen family must be included in Paid Family Leave. For some reason the Governor's Bill excludes chosen family. More than confusing and more than naïve, let's be clear. This is a direct attack on LGBTQ families and other blended families in our state. It should not have seen the light of day. We can give the Governor a break. He's new up here, maybe he doesn't know any better, but thankfully you all have
an opportunity to fix this mistake. To have an opportunity to demonstrate your support for all working families in the state, not just those who may remind you of your own. Please stand in support of SB 1, HB 5003 to provide real Paid Family Leave for all families. The LGBTQ plus community along with many vulnerable populations in our state are counting on you all to represent us.

Caregiving comes in all forms these days. As a millennial my older relatives need more attention and for us family means we help get them to doctor's appointments and shovel walkways. At the same time, I'm an auntie. Many of my nieces and nephews live in a city where most working people make low to moderate incomes. We know that the lack of affordable safe enriching childcare is absolutely crushing opportunities for poor families in our state. How can the state legislature when writing this law leave out the most vulnerable people who will depend on these benefits the most?

Let me describe to you some of the families I know, real families. If any of you wants to jump in and tell the people I'm describing who their real family members are, please do. My inclination and hopefully yours is to let them decide. The first, lesbian mom adopts a son. People who actively contribute to the raising of this child, her mother, her roommate, her older adult son and her ex-partner. Lesbian couple. One partner becomes pregnant. Both women are parents. The couple splits, the biological mother remarries. People who actively contribute to the raising of the child, the single adoptive mother, the biological mother and her new partner and the biological father and his partner. Heterosexual couple marries, have two
children. Each person has a child from previous marriage. The couple divorces the mother remarries. People who actively contribute to raising the children, the mother and step-father, the biological father, adult sibling, great aunt, grandmother and grandfather. Can anyone identify a member of the Governor's staff who knows these families better than they know themselves? Connecticut families celebrated the 10th year of marriage equality in our state last November. In that timeframe Connecticut had become more and diverse, not just our families. In 2019 in the United States fewer than 50 percent of children are raised heterosexual married monogamous couples households. Given how many different kinds of family are bound to each other by circumstance, necessity and love, how could state employees begin to determine which relationships are more valuable than others? What training will they undergo that prepares them to decide and explain during emergency situations why a step-father would be included but an older brother left out? Which state agency would you trust to make these decisions for your family and administer them fairly? Who among your colleagues do you trust to write these laws?

Every time I enter this building I'm awed by the stature and power. There are many people that you are responsible for considering when you come to work every day. Students who travel an hour and a half by bus to get to school, a 20 minute drive from where they live. Adults who have gone their adult lives without secure housing, every single day. Children who constantly wonder where their next meals are coming from. Young people who engage in sex work for a place to sleep a night. If you spend
a lot of time in this building, you'll likely never meet many folks like this. Many of you won't meet them in your districts either. That doesn't mean that you pretend that families different than yours don't exist. That doesn't mean you aren't responsible for considering their needs when you represent them here. Because Connecticut has some of the largest wealth and equality and is one the most racially segregated and racist states in our nation it's inevitable that the people in this building will not be as diverse or represent -- representative of our population at large. Statistics indicate that most members of the CGA be heterosexual, monogamously married, white property owners and men. Most people -- sorry, people across the state are trusting all of you and your colleagues, privileged elected officials with great power to understand their experiences that you can legislate wisely and fairly. It's time to toss the Governor's Bill that excludes the most vulnerable families in our state. Let's pretend we didn't see it. We need to pass real family leave that includes chosen families and make Connecticut a national leader. Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you Gannon, and thank you for your testimony. Any comments or questions? Yes, Representative Wilson-Pheanious followed by Representative Winkler.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): It's a question and it plays -- I've been here for some of the earlier discussion. It's about, and I fully believe in and understand every word of what you said and 100 percent behind it. But I wonder, I'm always thinking about the person who wants to misuse a system. I wonder if you can think of language or be
willing to maybe suggest some that can include all of those diverse important families that you're talking about and somehow exclude somebody who decides that they want time off at full pay because they have -- or because they can identify somebody who under the statute could give them that opportunity?

GANNON LONG: Yeah, I mean I'm -- I'm an activist, I'm a resident. I'm not a law -- and you know I'm not a policymaker or lobbyist but I guess what I would say is the language that I would try to look -- look at is the New Jersey that really has that inclusion. There's -- you know it's -- it's a case where a lot of time in Connecticut we kind of think we're the first people to -- you know we have one system; the other 49 states have something else but it would be a good idea to probably look at how other states that are ahead of us in this might have implemented that. I guess just from the fraud protection stand -- you know, standpoint I'm just going to kind of think about -- I'm going to think about it from the perspective from somebody who's really -- not really thinking about fraud or kind of knows how to abuse the system, but I'm thinking about people who really have no idea how to use the system at all. And -- and -- and the obligations of this body, I understand what you're saying about fraud but you -- the folks in this building don't pay enough attention to those people who need that basic support. And when you're talking about marginalized populations you have to reach out more, earlier, more often, more clearly and better you know? You have to bring more food, not less. So from my perspective I would focus on trying to make sure that people are safe and their families -- I
mean families are struggling out here. They are struggling out here, and it's not just queer families. Blend -- there's a lot of blended families, right? I just don't know who is the better person sitting up there. I'm sure you all can come up with a process. I think Gretchen had some ideas. Other states have some ideas. You know, come -- you have to come up with a process that's going to include people and it should air on the side of being inclusive especially when you have so many people that have been vulnerable and who have been ignored by the laws of this -- that have been passed in here for so long.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): So it sounds like you're telling me don't legislate by exception. In other wards don't focus on the exception, which would be the frauder and write off the many families who can effectively utilize the service.

GANNON LONG: And an example just from my experience, I have some experience working in retail and food and so I'm not suggesting this is exactly corresponding to this Bill but when I worked at Whole Foods one of the things they said was if they -- they have 100 percent return policy. Because if -- there's just a low incidence of fraud that they would have lost tons of customers who actually had legitimate reasons for returning products, right? They would have lost tons of customers who said, hey had a problem with this and you gave me a hard time about the receipt. I shop here for $100 every week, you know? So their policy was if like 95 percent -- if we lose 5 percent and we keep 95 percent of our customers coming back, that was their philosophy. So that's just kind of -- it's a business world,
it's different from here, I understand but it's just kind of a different way to think about it.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): No, it's a helpful analogy. Thank you very much.

GANNON LONG: And thank you for your time and for your service up here.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Winkler.

REP. WINKLER (56TH): I'd just like to add to that that I used to work at DSS and every time the -- if those cases that somebody is defrauding food stamps they get a $10 benefit higher than if they would have qualified anyway. And every time anybody ever went after these people, they spent a ton more money than they recovered.

GANNON LONG: The Veterans Administration on the federal level is a good example of the same thing.

REP. WINKLER (56TH): So my question is, is a family a family because it declares itself a family or because someone else decides they're a family?

GANNON LONG: I -- I personally think families should get to choose that for themselves.

REP. WINKLER (56TH): That's what I thought you were saying.

GANNON LONG: Yeah.

REP. WINKLER (56TH): I just wanted to be clear about it and I have no problem with that. I just wanted it to be out there. Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome, Representative Winkler. Representative Vargas.
REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. You know I was listening to my Republican colleagues raise the issue about you know the possible abuse of people declaring someone a relative so they could take advantage of -- of one of these paid -- paid leaves but I also realize that there are many people that though they may have a blood relative, have a very alienated relationship until all of the sudden they have a need for something and then they declare themselves very emotionally attached to the person. I see that all the time at Avery Heights where my parents are, you know? I talk to the staff there all the time and they say well you know, some of the relatives, we never see them until the elderly person passes away and then they come in crying and tearing their hair out but wanting to find out what assets if any, the elderly person had that they could inherit, so I think that that issue could be applied to any relative, you know? Whether a person is missing their relationship, whether it's a blood relative on that side -- I think of it as a red herring, so thank you for your testimony and thank you, Madam Chair.

GANNON LONG: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Representative. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): So I don't think I'm a Pollyanna but I may sound like that sometimes because I really do believe that most people are good and that they -- the numbers of people that are abusers is very small like you mentioned and I think that has been born out statistically in a lot of different settings. I remember when the State of Colorado spent $20 million trying to look for fraud
in the welfare system from undocumented residents, they found out they spent $20 million and didn't find any fraud, nothing to speak of de minimis. And so you know, I think that sometimes that is a red herring as has been said up here and I appreciate the analogy you made about Whole Foods. I doubt that it would even be 5 percent. I think there was a study in Rhode Island that it was -- that it was less than 1 percent, it was less than half a percent and so I think that we do have to look beyond that and I appreciate what you said about the amount of power we have here. It does feel like an awesome responsibility and I'm new to this, but I certainly -- maybe that's why I feel it so intensely and heavily and we want to get it right here. And I think that you know, the people that I've been interacting from both the House, the Senate and the Governor's office, I think we want to get it right and I think we can get it right. So I appreciate your testimony because it reminds us of how important it is and I know we're all going to be working toward that end, so thank you.

GANNON LONG: Yeah, thank you for your leadership.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Senator Kushner. And I will piggy-back off of everything that's been said by everyone sitting here. I don't think that we need to worry and beat ourselves about the fraud aspects of it like it was stated less than a half percent where they check on fraud. And I would like to give our agencies more credit than that. People are slick, they're conniving. If that's what they're going to do, they're going to attempt to do it but we have certifications. There will be regulations in place and I trust that it will be a tight net and any -- not to say that nothing won't
get through or slip through but I do believe it will be so minimum that it wouldn't even be worth it for us to go after it.

GANNON LONG: I mean there's -- there's no reason to think that it wouldn't be similar to any other you know, whatever the percentage is for any benefit that's given out, there's going to be some percentage that has some level of fraud so you guys -- you know, it's not like it's a forgone conclusion. You're still writing the Bill. You still can put some of those provisions in there and make those strengths. You can look at state agencies like DSS or others that give out benefits and see what their fraud you know, percentages are. Figure out who the lowest is and try to emulate what they do, you know?

REP. PORTER (94TH): I agree.

GANNON LONG: I mean there's -- I think you all are pretty smart. You have a lot of information at your fingertips I think to be able to make it work. I think what really is hard to focus on is the human beings who are impacted by your decisions. You know the fact that this state has done nothing to help people you know, affordable housing, realistic childcare opportunities, you know good transportation that you don't have to rely on a car to get to your job an hour away 'cause you can't afford to live where you work. You know, we're not doing enough on those issues to help people in their lives, so how can the state come in and say and now you can't be your own family either. Really? That seems crazy to me and I -- I really applaud you all for being so you know, inclusive in the work that you're doing and I -- if there's anything that I or
folks I know can do to help kind the Governor understand that this Bill really does impact real families, you know please don't hesitate to reach out.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Well I will say this, after today's public hearing and all the testimony that's been shared I would venture to guess that the Governor is listening and he's learning, whatever it is he doesn't know, he hears you know? And I had an opportunity to speak with him and I'll say it publicly you know? I believe that the Governor's heart is in the right place. I believe his intentions are good and that his goal, his ultimate goal is to serve the people of this state to the -- to the best of his ability and this is why we have these public hearings so that, not just the Governor, all of us, not even just this Committee, but everyone in this building that will be voting on this, has the opportunity to hear the voices of the people because for me that's what it's always been about. Voting for the people. It ain't about me. It's so much bigger than me. It's bigger than Julie. Anyone sitting up here on this dais. It is about the people in this state and it is about bringing humanity back to everything. Not just this, everything. We have stripped the people of their humanity and their dignity and I take it personal. So I have taken it very serious to make sure that I use the power that I have to get that back in government and make sure we're doing right by the people that put us in government on their behalf. So thank you Gannon for the work you do outside this building because I know you do a lot of good work outside this building for the city of Hartford and greater Hartford. So I want to personally thank you
for all you do and the sacrifices you make on behalf of the people of the state.

GANNON LONG: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome.

GANNON LONG: Thank you all for the opportunity.


ZACH CAMPBELL: Good afternoon. Thank you for having me.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome. The floor is yours.

ZACH CAMPBELL: All right. My name is Zach Campbell. I'm the Organizing Director at Connecticut Working Families Party and I live here in Hartford, Connecticut. I'm here in support of Senate Bill 881 with some amendments I want to highlight. A couple of aspects -- I'm sorry, a couple of aspects that are important to me for making the program accessible and affordable. Public comprehensive Paid Time and Medical Leave is essential to the health of our state and it's important that Paid Leave Program protects all of the people who pay into it. I come from an immediate family of six filled with so-called pre-existing conditions from epilepsy, asthma and fibromyalgia to anxiety, depression and autism. That doesn't even cover the accidents that can happen to anyone.

In the first half of my childhood my family succeeded in large part because my parents had union jobs with paid leave policies. When I nearly went
blind in a severe poisonous spider bite reaction, yes that happened, my parents were there for me. When my sister suffered bizarre -- sorry, suffered burns and hearing loss as a baby they were never torn away from here. And when another sister suffered a major -- a major seizure they could make sure she was never alone in all those nights in that frightening hospital. Paid Leave shaped my family for the better.

Later in my childhood when my parents no longer had those protections I learned firsthand how difficult it can be to choose between healthcare and the bills. And all the while I knew that many of my neighbors had it even worse than we did. Throughout my work with Working Families, my parents have proud and excited to see me helping the fight to pass this legislation and I was happy to tell them that so many candidates last year were running in support of the program. I'm glad today to have the Governor's support on this critical issue and to see the legislature making it a priority.

I'm also see that Senate Bill 881 includes full job protection for all workers taking paid leave which is critical to building a program people can actually use. My family's experience taught me firsthand how crucial high-wage replacement is to any Paid Leave Program and I urge the Committee to remember that and to at minimum, not go below the comprise on Senate Bill 881. If wage replacement is insufficient low and middle income workers won't be able to survive on it and will be stuck in a position where they cannot afford Paid Leave protections even when they're putting into it. I know we can do better than that.
The same is true for family definition. To have universal and comprehensive paid leave means to include all families and we cannot do that without a definition of family that accounts for chosen family. When I look at the families of many of my closest friends and some of my own relatives, I see much more than the narrow and outdated definition currently present in Senate Bill 881. Other states have gotten family definition right as has been mentioned earlier today, and so can well. Paid Family Medical Leave is something that we must get done this year, as I'm sure many of you recognize. It's the smart thing to do for our economy, the right thing to do for our working families and the kind of legislation Connecticut really needs to move forward. But I hope that when we pass this wonderful idea, we do it in a way to make sure everyone is included regardless of how much they make or who they consider family.

I urge the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers to pass a comprehensive accessible and real Paid Family Medical Leave policy this year that is inclusive and affordable to all workers. Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Zach. Any comments or questions from the Committee? Seeing none, I'd just like to thank you again.

ZACH CAMPBELL: I appreciate it. Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome. You have a good day. Next up we have Ed Hawthorne. Good afternoon.

ED HAWTHORNE: Good afternoon.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Welcome.
ED HAWTHORNE: It's good to be back. So my name is Edward A. Hawthorne. I'm the Chief Steward for Area 2 for AFSCME Local 269 at DOL. I'm also the President of the Western Connecticut Central Labor Coalition of AFL-CIO. On behalf of my union brothers and sisters I stand in support of Senate Bill 881 and seek alternations regarding the appeals process in Section 9 as well as the definition of Administrator in Section 1, Subsection 2. The Connecticut Department of Labor and the members of AFSCME Local 269 should administer this vital program for workers for our members expertise, our existing operating system as well as the modernized one that's currently being worked on by the Department of Labor and a lot of our members are actually on that project as well.

Currently DOL collects and monitors all wages from Connecticut's 50,000 plus liable and reimbursable employers. All of our member employees have, and I can attest to this, have undergone a spending process required by US DOL. Privatization of this program would require CT-DOL send wage database information to a third party who has not undergone that vigorous spending process, which leaves the union to -- to believe that there should be a grave concern -- I mean there is for us and there should be for you, that this third party may release the personal identifying information and there may be a breach and we think the probability of doing so with the shared information would be high.

Presently our members have embarked as I mentioned earlier on a technological initiative when an existing state consortium to modernize our current system. As part of the benefit system, the modernized system was designed to allow each state
the ability to configure payment programs. So integrating this can be integrated into the program. It may take time but anything that takes time -- it's going to take that time if it's privatized anyway so we may as well keep it in house and do it right the first time and have some sort of control over what the outcome is. And that's the union stance on that. It's much more detailed in my testimony and I won't bore you with the specifics of it but I ask the language referencing the outsourcing of this program in Section 1, Sub. 2 to a quasi-public agency be removed from Section 1 of the Bill because it should stay in house and we should have control over what this looks like as far as the administration.

Another point of concern for our members and the one that's close to me is the current structure of the appeals process in the proposed Bill. I believe as it's currently structured will leave many frustrated. It calls for the Commissioner to make a decision, to have it moved directly to Superior Court. I urge the Committee to reconsider this. The Appeals Division of the Department of Labor currently handles all appeals stemming from unemployment compensation. It consists of two levels, the Referee section as well as the Board of Review. I'm currently employed as an Appeals Referee and I'm here to represent the interest of those that employ as that such as I am.

I also eight years ago, when I first got out of law school, I had the honor of working as a temporary assistant clerk in the judicial district of New Haven. They are not -- I've seen it on both sides. They're not as effective, efficient or timely as the Appeals Division is in hearing the processing of
administrative claims. As Referees my members are scheduled to conduct between 20 and 27 unemployment hearings per week. During the year 2018, last year I personally issued 671 full decisions and countless other form decisions for people that you know, didn't show up, withdrawals, things such as that. I know of no judge that carries such a large caseload. As Referees we promptly issue decisions within a few days. Judges as we know do not. As Referees we have the duty of diligent inquiry. We're required to develop a record so when an unrepresented party comes before us, we assist them in developing a record so something clear comes out of the process. The way the process is now they would be essentially be thrown to Superior Court to a judge that has no such duty.

Our members are lenient with unrepresented parties regarding hearing process and procedures. The Superior Court is helpful in their own right but they're nowhere near as lenient as an administrative proceeding would be.

Also one thing that should be mentioned, the Superior Court has no duty to provide interpreter services to non-English speakers in a civil proceeding whereas the Department of Labor does have a professional interpreter for each and every one of our hearings. This Bill asks most residents to contribute their hard-earned income into a fund they expect to access in the time of great need. We cannot ask these people to navigate a court system with an undeveloped record. We cannot ask these people to wait until an overloaded court system finds the time to hear their case. Much like unemployment compensation this Bill is meant to be a social safety net, so why not mirror the appeals
process of this program with an already established, efficient and much more cost-effective program in place regarding unemployment insurance.

In conclusion, on behalf of the members of AFSCME Local-269, I urge you to allow my union brothers and sisters to do what we do best, to promptly, securely, efficiently and fairly administer all aspects of this social safety net program. Thank you and if you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. And any comments or questions from the Committee? I don't think I have any because we've had a discussion and I thank you for putting that on the record about the Referee and how this can be handled in house with DOL. I think that's the side of our conversation we can have because I actually did do some inquiring around that and we'll discuss that off line what I was told and I would like to hear your rebuttal.

ED HAWTHORNE: Great, thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): All right. You're welcome and thank you for taking the time to be here today.

ED HAWTHORNE: All right. Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome. Have a good day.

ED HAWTHORNE: You too.


TAYLOR ENDRESS: Hello.

REP. PORTER (94TH): How are you?
TAYLOR ENDRESS: Pretty good. How about yourself?

REP. PORTER (94TH): I'm doing well. Great to see you and great to have you here today. What do you have to say to us?

TAYLOR ENDRESS: Thank you very much. All right. So my name is Taylor Endress. I reside in Manchester, Connecticut. I am presenting on House Bill 7292 THE ACT CONCERNING SOCIAL WORK TITLE PROTECTION TO THE LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE. I am a Naval Veteran and a BSW student at UCONN School of Social Work, and am here to testify on behalf of my cohort who is actually here today, back there.

We strongly believe that title protection is important to our profession. As BSW students, we are currently engaged in rigorous academic training, which consists of cultural competency, ethical practice, and we engage in over 400 hours of volunteer and field work. Individuals that have not gone through such academic training and not earned a degree in social work reflects negatively on the entire social work profession. Social workers with degrees are bound by the NASW Code of Ethics. These public standards are our ethical roadmap to which we are held accountable. Hence, consumers who are provided inadequate services and/or harmed by social workers in name only, do not have adequate reporting mechanisms to file complaints. Therefore creating more harm to our consumers, the people we fight so hard to advocate for and protect.

Although we support title protection for social workers, we strongly believe the language of the Bill must be changed to allow social worker, who have earned a degree but do not have a license, to
continue to call themselves social workers. As BSW students, we are unable to obtain a license in social work in the state of Connecticut. Some of us will work in the field for a few years prior to obtaining an MSW, if and when we decide to obtain an MSW, some of us may be interested in macro-level work, which doesn't require a license to practice. The deepest roots of the social work profession stem from macro-level social workers who were engaged in social and political action aimed at addressing social injustice. I myself am one of the BSW students who is interested in policy and large-scale advocacy, therefore I do not need a license to practice. I can't imagine after all the hard work between school and internships not being called a social worker. To some it may just be a title but to me it holds significant weight. I am proud of my profession's history and plan to carry on its legacy. Macro-level social work -- macro-level social work involves interventions and advocacy on a large scale, which affects entire communities, states or even countries. It helps clients by intervening in large systems that may seem beyond the reach of a single individual. Finally, banning social workers who don't have a license but have a degree in social work from calling themselves social workers is not only disrespectful and a devaluation of our educational degree but can potentially impact our ability to obtain a job in the field of social work, a field that we are so passionately dedicated to. Thank you for your time today.

REP. PORTER (94TH): I didn't even have to look to my right because is the conversation that we've had earlier today and we -- we got corrected on this.
I'm going to let Representative Wilson-Pheanious have the floor.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Thank you. I just wanted to compliment you on your testimony. It hit all the points that I was trying to make earlier and I do think we'll be able to resolve the issue. It is so important as a social worker that our -- that what social work can do, be protected and that people that aren't trained to be that, not be able to call themselves so and you've made those -- you've made those points very well and I certainly appreciate your presence and your advocacy for our profession.

TAYLOR ENDRESS: Thank you very much.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): You're welcome.

REP. PORTER (94TH): From one social worker to another. And she did. We had a conversation earlier. We will definitely make sure that what needs to be addressed is addressed. I wholeheartedly agree with yourself and the Representative and I'm sure many others that are social workers that understand the difference between what we actually attempted to do, right? And how it came out.

TAYLOR ENDRESS: I definitely appreciate it.

REP. PORTER (94TH): There's room for correction so duly noted. And thank you so much. I'm proud. You did such a great job.

TAYLOR ENDRESS: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): In articulating you know, where you stand on this and why and your cohort should be
very proud of you as well. Thank you for being here today and for your testimony.

TAYLOR ENDRESS: Thank you so much.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome. Next up we have Tom Swan. Come on down. You've been so patient today, Tom. Welcome, welcome, welcome.

TOM SWAN: Thank you. Good afternoon, Representative Porter, Senator Kushner. It's great to be here today. My name is Tom Swan and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group. On behalf of our thousands of members statewide I want to thank you for all that you are attempting to do this year to help working families.

We are very happy to see that Governor -- Governor Lamont has proposed SB 881, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE PROGRAM, but we urge you to adopt the inclusive family definition others have spoken about before to have a more adequate wage replacement proposal in this Bill for low-wage workers and have it administered by the public as similar in SB 1 and HB 5003. This is a vital program for attracting younger workers and will make Connecticut more competitive with our neighboring states, so it important that we get it right.

CCAG also applauds your raising of SB 1004, AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC INSURANCE OPTIONS FOR SMALL BUSINESS EMPLOYEES. Connecticut's small businesses do not have the capacity to negotiate with insurers and providers and therefore face a competitive disadvantage from large employers. This impacts the ability of their employees and families to access quality healthcare. The workers, their employers and families be able -- deserve to be able to take
advantage of the state's ability to control costs and cutting-edge prevention focused plan design that state employees have. This Bill puts legislature clearly on the side of small businesses and their employees in a way that really matters to small employers, their workers and their families.

No one can argue that the current state of the health insurance market is working for this group of people and the trajectory is only going to get worse. The employees of small businesses hate high deductible plans just like everyone else. They were pushed on us as a means to keep healthcare costs down, but really have only served to enrich insurance companies, increased out of pocket costs faster than peoples' pay has increased, have patients avoid necessary care and turn doctor's offices into collection agencies.

Small employers and their employees want health insurance that is stable and is -- that is there when their families and employees need care.

Furthermore, it does not make sense from a business or a from an economic development perspective to ask small businesses and their employees to have to dedicate time and resources to navigating the evolving health care system. In Connecticut two hospital systems have -- have arguably a monopoly control of hospital beds and are buying up doctor practices at an alarming rate. Nationally, we are seeing merger and acquisitions taking place that are resulting in vertically integrated healthcare conglomerates that no one has figured out how to regulate let alone asking small businesses to navigate successfully. It should be clear to all of us that Connecticut's small business environment
where so many workers in Connecticut work and the health of our workforce would improve greatly from passage of this legislation.

Thank you for your raising this and we look forward to working with you to see this concept to reality this year.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Are there questions or comments from the Committee? Well I want -- I have a comment and perhaps a question but I really want to thank you for I believe, I should know on wood, there's plenty of wood here but I believe you're the last person to testify in this public hearing today. I hate to say that because somebody always walks in when I do -- when I do say that, but I'm really appreciative that you addressed the public option Bill. We have not had a lot of testimony about it but it gives me the opportunity to tell you some of our thinking and -- and to get your feedback on whether or not it makes sense. Because you know, as we are as a lot of people came out and spoke about, we are working to pass an increase in the minimum wage and that's something that we feel is very, very important and I think there is agreement throughout the legislature and with the Governor's office that we're going to see an increase in the minimum wage.

We've also heard from some small businesses that this is going to be difficult for them, even some who support it, let us know that it's difficult and one of the things that we heard repeatedly is that if we could help them with their health insurance costs that that would be a real way to package this and not just help the workers, but also helps small businesses to thrive and that was our thinking
behind having a Bill here. We know that there was a big hearing on public option the other day in the Insurance Committee and there were lots of people who testified and it got a lot of attention and I feel hopeful and optimistic that we see fit to do that in a very broad way. But if we were not to be able to do that broadly, I would still want to see this Bill move forward and be passed into law so that we could very specifically help small businesses and I wondered if you could comment on that a little?

TOM SWAN: Yes. I think the press conference which you were at the other day before the hearing, I'm left thinking about Senator Cohen's statement during the press conference. As a small employer with a family, their family has for insurance just for her family because she can no longer afford to provide it for the workforce, which she would prefer to be able to do, it is a $15,000 a year premium with a $15,000 a year high deductible out-of-pocket expense. For many small business owners, that is not an affordable healthcare plan. That is often times the margin and coming from a family you know; whose father had a business that didn't work out at the end. I know what those margins are. And when you don't have that degree of confidence or you can't go out and think of starting a new business because of job lock, or if you offer it to your employees; and I talked to another Senator who is absolutely struggling with the fact that they're having to push more and more of the costs onto their workers, that traditionally they'd always paid 100 percent of the healthcare and because of the increases of costs and their inability not be large enough to negotiate with providers or insurers to
push more and more of those costs on, this Senator was really worried about what the impact would be on their workforce and how it would impact their ability to both recruit, but also retain workers that they want to have.

And for frontline workers in places the idea of my family having a $15,000 out-of-pocket deductible in any given year is outrageous and the state has figured out a way to improve their worker's health, save money and not shift that degree of cost onto our employees, why wouldn't we want small employers and their employees in Connecticut to benefit from that? That's how come I think it's really great that we're hearing this in multiple Committees, we're hearing it here so that we can be thinking through from the different perspective whether it's from the people who work for these businesses or these businesses how -- how it works and I think it makes a clear statement that this Committee wants to not only stand with workers, but they want to see businesses thrive to be able to take good care of workers. And I want to -- I want to commend you all for doing that and the amount of work that you've already done this session. You've had some of the longest, I don't think the longest hearings this year, so I'm happy to help keep this one a little shorter.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Well I appreciate that. It does great though -- I think it makes good policy and good sense for Committees like ours to look at the whole picture and this is one area where you've done that. Something that also came up in our previous hearing on minimum wage, because I do see all of these you know, the most important Bills that we've taken up -- all the Bills are important, but I
want to say some of the Bills that have gotten the most attention I think work together to really move our state forward and that's what we're trying to do. There was testimony about concern about raising the minimum wage and then the benefits clips that people would not have access to some of the benefits they currently have around childcare or around healthcare, and to my mind it seems -- maybe this is simplistic but it would seem to me if our goal is to lift people up, we wouldn't want to cut those benefits off for them so that there ought to be a way to look at those benefits and make sure that in way their index also to go up as we raise the minimum wage and so I would think that's something we would want to be doing.

TOM SWAN: I wholeheartedly agree and I think that we should look to re-visit some of the earlier cuts to the HUSKY Program and restore it to 200 percent or 201 percent of the federal poverty level as part of the companion piece. But for those that might still be above that because of the increase in minimum wage and going up, having more affordable quality healthcare available for those folks, whether it's you know be similar to face two of the Insurance Committee Bill with a qualified health plan or offer it as part of their you know, from their employers where they don't get hit with these high deductible plans or being asked to some type of fake association health plan. I think your comprehensive approach to this makes total sense and it's something we need to look at on a variety of fronts. The -- restoring the HUSKY cuts would not -- would not be a big budget number and a very large percentage of that or majority of that would come
from the federal government so that seems to make sense to deal with the cliff in terms of healthcare.

On the childcare stuff and all, I'm not as steeped in that policy as healthcare so I'd go with some of the -- I'd listen to some of the earlier speakers, specifically Merrill Gay on that, to figure out how to do it. But the fact that you're looking at it in that type of comprehensive way is exactly what the State of Connecticut needs, so thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Any other questions or comments? Any other -- thank you, Tom. And are there any -- is there anyone in this room that would like to be heard? Having heard -- seeing no hands go up there then I believe we can adjourn this public hearing and thank you all for your time and your --