

PAID LEAVE for ALL

Letter to the Ways and Means Committee Submitted by the Worker Advisory Group, Paid Leave for All Campaign January 28, 2020

Thank you, Chairman Neal and Members of the Ways and Means Committee, for holding this Hearing on Legislative Proposals for Paid Family and Medical Leave. We are each a leader in our state in the fight for affordable time to care. Each of us represents millions of employees who need paid leave to care for themselves or a loved one, and often have none—at great cost to our families, our health, and our economic security. As you deliberate today, we urge you to keep us in mind and ask: will the proposal you're considering include us? Will it reduce or perpetuate racial, gender, and income inequality?

Below is a short version of our realities.



Margarita Viveros, Salem, Oregon, Family Forward Oregon. Two years ago, just after my 16th birthday, I was diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder that caused a stroke and a month in the hospital. The pain was not in the stay itself. It was in the thought that my mother, a farm laborer, could lose her job and everything that she has worked for, while making sure I was able to recuperate. We need paid leave for caregivers. Include me and the millions like me.



Ashley Bostick, Savannah, GA, 9to5 Georgia: Every parent wants to be there for a new child and still be able to earn a living. When my first child was born, I lost my job. And with the second, I had to go back to work too soon, despite complications from diabetes. I wanted to be home longer with my daughter, but I knew if I did, we wouldn't have anywhere to live. We need paid leave for all. Include me and the millions like me.



Christina Hayes, Detroit, MI, Mothering Justice: I suffer from lupus. Adding to my stress, was the lack of enough paid time to get the care I needed. The bills kept coming, so I had no choice but to go to work and miss blood draws and treatments. Ultimately, I had to leave the job I had invested years in after I passed out at work and was taken on a stretcher. We need paid leave for our own health. Include me and the millions like me.



Kris Garcia, Denver, CO, 9to5 Colorado: When my father was dying in Texas, my boss allowed only four unpaid days. On top of the anguish, I fell behind on my car payment and couldn't pay my light bill. Then I got the call that he wasn't going to make it. All I could think about was my father being alone as he took his last breath. Family leave is vital no matter who makes up your family. Many in the LGBTQ community have family members bound not by blood or marriage but by commitment. We need paid leave for all families. Include me and the millions like me.



Pepper Nappo, Derry, NH, MomsRising: When I was pregnant, neither my job as a barber nor my husband's in construction provided any paid leave. We both took on extra hours to save for my maternity leave. But at 30 weeks, I broke three ribs and work was not an option. That caused a financial crisis for our family. Six weeks later, after a difficult birth, my husband was forced to drop Atlas and me at home and head straight to his job.

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I was alone, this time covered in stitches and holding a newborn. We need paid leave for all. Include me and the millions like me.



Tameka Henry, Las Vegas, NV, Make It Work Nevada: I'm a mother of four and my husband is disabled. Once he became ill, his work let him go and I was the sole breadwinner. Each time he was hospitalized, I'd have to take off without pay, and often that meant losing my job. It's like starting from scratch every time. That cost my family \$200,000 over a decade. We need paid leave for those who deal with disabilities. Include me and the millions like me.



Virginia Badillo, Austin, TX, Workers Defense Project: After a C-section, I needed my husband to care for me and our newborn son, but he had no paid leave. I had postpartum depression and wasn't able to breast-feed my son. Last year, I had to have surgery to remove my gallbladder and had to go back to work too soon. It breaks our hearts that we have to decide between making sure we can pay for our expenses, or take care of our son and ourselves. Include me and the millions like me.



Permelia Toney-Bass, Roselle, NJ, NJ Citizen Action: I've had surgery twice for lung cancer. I needed care from my adult daughter, but the first time she had no paid leave and could take only a day here and there. The second time, she was able to use New Jersey's paid leave law. Having someone who really knows you take care of you makes a big difference. I know I healed faster because she was there. We need paid leave for all. Include me and the millions like me.



Bethany Fauteux, New Bedford, MA, Coalition for Social Justice: In order to keep a roof over our heads, I had to return to work three weeks after giving birth. As I sat on the floor taking care of other mothers' babies, the pain of the not-yet-healed c-section stitches didn't compare to the pain of not being with my own brand new baby. Families should always come first. Include me and the millions like me.



Debbi Simmons Harris, Eagan, MN, The Arc: Our third child, was born early just after the FMLA went into effect. Unpaid leave was hard. Our son needed 10 surgeries the first year. My husband was a Marine and my job provided our insurance, so I had to balance meeting work deadlines with hospital time. My son still has complex medical needs. Our home has the equivalent of an ICU. We need paid leave for all. Include me and the millions like me.



Heather Oglesby, Dunham, GA, Caring Across Generations: I provide care for my mother, who has dementia. It's an honor to care for her, but it shouldn't cost me my finances, my career, my relationships and my health. We need paid leave for all. Include me and the millions like me.