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**Testimony before the Joint Committee on Labor and Public Employees, March 8, 2018  
In Support of S.B. 1, AN ACT CONCERNING EARNED FAMILY AND MEDICAL  
LEAVE, and H.B. 5387, AN ACT CONCERNING PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE.**

Good Afternoon Senator Gomes, Senator Miner, Representative Porter, and Members of the Committee on Labor and Public Employees.

My name is Samantha Lew. I am a graduate student at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work. I am testifying today on behalf of the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS). CAHS is a statewide nonprofit agency that works to reduce poverty and promote equity and economic success for children and families through both policy and program initiatives.

CAHS is here today in support of S.B. 1, An Act Concerning Earned Family and Medical Leave, and H.B. 5387, An Act Concerning Paid Family Medical Leave. These bills would create a public insurance system, paid with employee contributions, creating a new program that will protect children and families in the state.

Every day, families in the state of Connecticut must juggle between employment and family responsibilities. Compared to 183 other countries, the United States is the only one without a family paid leave plan.<sup>1</sup> As a good first step, the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was passed in 1993, giving hard-working families and individuals the ability to take unpaid time off in the event of hardship.<sup>2</sup> However, only 59% of working individuals in Connecticut can access the FMLA,<sup>3</sup> and FMLA is not a paid leave plan, which limits access for families who need a paycheck to live.

In the event of a family medical crisis or the birth of a child, low-wage, hourly workers are less likely to have access to any time off, let alone paid time off. Subsequently, these employees, who barely make ends meet from month to month, face impossible choices when life events happen, such as caring for a newborn or taking time to care for a sick relative.

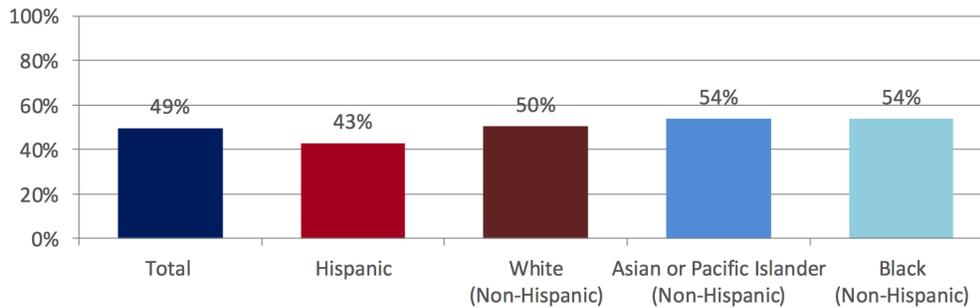
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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bloombergview.com/quicktake/family-leave>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ct.gov/dmhas/lib/dmhas/hrd/fmla-understanding.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [diversitydatakids.org](http://www.diversitydatakids.org). (2015). *Working Adults Who Are Eligible For and Can Afford FMLA Unpaid Leave (Share)*. Brandeis University, The Heller School, Institute for Child, Youth and Family Policy Publication. Retrieved 24 January 2018, from <http://www.diversitydatakids.org/data/ranking/529/working-adults-who-are-eligible-for-and-can-afford-fmla-unpaid-leave-share/#loct=2&cat=44,25&tf=17>; Workers are considered unable to take unpaid FMLA leave because they are either ineligible based on employer size or job tenure requirements or because 12 weeks of lost wages from unpaid leave would result in their family income dropping to or under 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

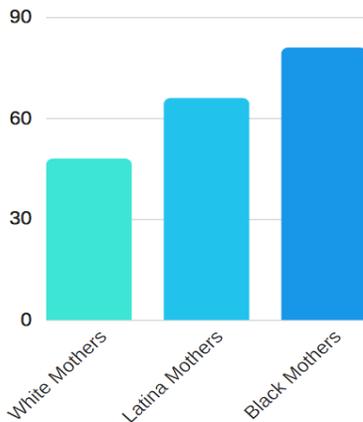
Share of working parents who are eligible for FMLA leave, by race/ethnicity



Source: diversitydatakids.org calculations of Current Population Survey, 2011-2014 March Annual Social and

Additional data tells us that currently only 50% of White non-Hispanic working parents in the state are eligible for unpaid family leave, compared to 38.5% for Hispanic and 54.6% for Blacks. However, while 46.4% of White families can afford unpaid leave, only 26.6% of Latino and 35.6% of African-American parents have this ability.<sup>4</sup>

Women’s wages support their households  
**Connecticut**



Source: <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/paid-leave/paid-leave-means-a-stronger-connecticut.pdf>

In Connecticut, women make up 49% of the labor force, with 81% of Black mothers, 66% of Latina mothers, and 48% of White mothers working.<sup>5</sup> Many of these are single parent families with only one paycheck supporting the family.

While both men and women would be eligible to benefit from paid leave, it is often the woman in the family that is the primary caregiver for ill parents and young children.

Additionally, we know that the time parents spend with new babies is important to the baby’s development:

<sup>4</sup> Source: diversitydatakids.org calculations of Current Population Survey, 2011-2014 March Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Public Use Microdata Files (I, II)

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, J. (2016, September 8). *Breadwinner Mothers by Race/Ethnicity and State*. Institute for Women's Policy Research Publication. Retrieved 24 January 2018, from <https://iwpr.org/publications/breadwinner-mothers-by-raceethnicity-and-state>; “Key breadwinner” means a single mother who heads a household or a married mother who contributes 40 percent or more of the couple’s joint earnings. Nationally, 81 percent of Black mothers are key breadwinners; 67 percent of Native American mothers are key breadwinners; 60 percent of mothers identifying as multiracial or “other” race are key breadwinners; 53 percent of Latina mothers are key breadwinners; 50 percent of white mothers are key breadwinners; and 44 percent of Asian mothers are key breadwinners.

- In an infant's early developmental stages, the right hemisphere of the brain connects the limbic system and the automatic nervous system, which is the stress response. The effects of a secure positive attachment between a child and the caretaker have significance on brain development and infant mental health.<sup>6</sup>
- Research suggests that mothers healing from childbirth should take up to 12 weeks before returning to work. Returning to work too early can cause a new mother a heightened risk of postpartum depression as well as needing time to bond with their newborn.<sup>7</sup>
- Fathers that take the time off after the birth of a child become more involved in the direct care.
- Studies show that sick children recover at a faster rate when taken care of by their parents.<sup>5</sup> Parents that take time off to be with sick children not only improve children's health, but strengthen the family bond, giving children the security they need to thrive.<sup>8</sup>

Connecticut families should not have to struggle with choosing between a job, their health, or the health of their family.

Affordable, accessible, publicly administered paid family leave will ensure that hardworking Connecticut residents can take the time needed for their medical, parental, and care-giving responsibilities without falling behind on their bills.

How does this plan work? A key component of S.B. 1 provides for Connecticut workers to be eligible for 12 weeks of leave, plus an additional two weeks for a serious health issue related to pregnancy that results in incapacity. The proposed paid family and medical leave plan could be funded by employee premiums and limits at a maximum of 0.5% coming from weekly earnings.<sup>9</sup> There is not an employer match. These premiums would be collected and accessible a year from the start of their personal contributions. In addition, this paid leave system would only allow employees who earn minimum of \$2,325 in the highest earning quarter within the five most recently completed calendar quarters to be eligible to receive the benefit.<sup>10</sup>

Passing a progressive paid leave system in Connecticut would support not only workers and families, but also businesses in Connecticut. Paid leave increases and improves productivity, morale, and worker retention, and saves businesses having to spend money and time on hiring new employees.<sup>11</sup>

Paid family and medical leave will not only attract more workers to stay in Connecticut, but will also create a sustaining environment in which future generations of residents stay and contribute to the prosperity of this state.

No parent or adult with elderly dependents should be forced to choose between caring for the family they love and keeping the job they need. CAHS urges the Committee and full General Assembly to support

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<sup>6</sup> Schore, A. N. (2001). Effects of a secure attachment relationship on right brain development, affect regulation, and infant mental health. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 22(1/2), 7-66.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.modernmom.com/2c3305a2-051f-11e2-9d62-404062497d7e.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/paid-leave/children-benefit-when-parents.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Institute for Women's Policy Research: Implementing Paid Family and Medical Leave in Connecticut. Retrieved from: <https://fmli.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/implementation-study.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://fmli.files.wordpress.com/2016/08/pfml-key-components-march-2018.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://fmli.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/businesses-need-paid-family-leave1.pdf>

S.B. 1 and H.B. 5387. They will help Connecticut to remain economically competitive and give working families in our state the support they deserve.

Thank you for your time.