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S21.18 oral

Oral submission to the Education and Workforce Committee on the Holidays (Parent-Teacher Interview Leave) Amendment Bill

Presenters

Gabriel BrettKelly and Bernice Williams

Education and Workforce Select Committee

Marja Lubeck, Chair, Labour, Camilla Belich, Labour, Chris Baillie, ACT, Paul Goldsmith, National, Jan Logie, Greens, Jo Luxton, Labour, Ibrahim Omer, Labour, Angela Roberts, Labour, Erica Stanford, National

Introduction

1. My name is Gabriel BrettKelly and I'm the employment convenor for the National Council of Women.

NCWNZ's views

2. As you will see from our written submission, we support this Bill because of the importance of parents being involved with their children's schooling. We note previous and current Government initiatives to encourage parents to become involved with their children's learning and education. In particular we support the small but significant way in which the Bill's amendment guarantees Māori parents and their children the right to fully participate in the education system. It may contribute a little to addressing the educational inequities currently evident in achievement data for Māori children.
3. We also support the Bill's stated aim of ensuring that insecure and casualised workers can attend parent-teacher interviews. In reality, however, a fast-food worker who is rostered on the day of a parent-teacher interview will likely be taken off that roster and given another when one becomes available, or worse still not given any more rosters. A home-support worker who has only 20 hours a week of work guaranteed will likely be given a similar choice, one between working or attending parent-teacher interviews. In addition, there have been cases reported where home-support workers who have

taken leave have found that their elderly or disabled clients did not have replacement workers to care for them. There is concern that the same thing will happen with parent-teacher interview leave, with some home-support workers left torn between the responsibilities they feel for their children and for their clients.

4. We live in a world where more and more businesses and organisations rely on transferring some of the costs of employing staff on to the workers in order to meet their bottom lines or to make a profit. Small increases in family-friendly rights such as those proposed in this Bill need to be enforceable and supported by wider legislation, which ensures decent work.
5. As a final point I would like to draw your attention to the National Council of Women's Gender Attitudes Surveys which can be found on our website. As outlined in our written submission, the results show that an overwhelming majority of New Zealanders believe that parents, regardless of their gender, should look after children and bring in income. We are encouraged to see the proposed amendment aligns with that view, and we are pleased to support the Bill.

Questions

Thank you from Chair, Marja Lubeck, for NCWNZ's contribution.

Q: Marja Lubeck. What do you think about the previous submitter's position and the view that parents should use annual leave to attend parent-teacher interviews?

A: We refer again to our Gender Attitudes Surveys where results show 87% of Zealanders believe men and women should be involved with raising children, and having parents closely involved with raising children is valuable for the whole of society. Annual leave is for the refreshment of the worker, and this is something quite different. I was shocked and sad to hear an employer's representative not already giving employees time off to attend parent-teacher interviews.

Q: Marja Lubeck. You spoke about workers in insecure and casual work, ones whose employers are not already allowing time off to attend parent-teacher interviews; these are the ones who are missing out. Did you want to speak a little bit more to that?

A: Casual workers, workers on contracts and in insecure work, they miss out on so much and that is because employers are transferring those costs on to the worker, and we are ending up with an underclass of workers. It's not just low paid workers either, all sorts of workers – those on contracts end up missing out on things that permanent and secure work brings. This will be another case when some of them will definitely miss out on this additional benefit, and therefore their children will miss out. If you have parents who aren't connected into their children's progress then those children will not progress so well.

I wondered about the previous submitter who was representing a male-dominated industry; do they perhaps see that fathers don't need to take part in their children's parent-teacher interviews? That's a very outdated attitude. By far the majority of New Zealanders don't believe that anymore.

Q: Chris Baillie. Do you consider parents attending prize-giving assemblies or school sports occasions as really important in that relationship as well?

A: Yes, if they can. Absolutely.