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## Written Testimony for FY 2025 Budget Hearing

*Funding the start-up costs for a universal, state-run paid family and medical leave program with \$37 million in one-time funds.*

I am Mary Claire Carroll, of Richmond. I am a solo entrepreneur and owner of Carroll Photos,LLC, a photography studio. I am also a member of Women's Business Owner Network.(WBON) **I am writing to ask your committee to please fund the start-up costs for a universal, state-run paid family and medical leave program with \$37 million in one-time funds.**

I have been a family caregiver for much of my working life. I made sure I was available to take my parents to medical appointments, spent time with them when they were sick in their later years. I balanced their care with being a Mom to a young son, and helping my husband care for his aging parents. When our parents passed. I cared for my husband after his stroke, and most recently provide respite for my sister's partner since she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. I love my family and gladly help with their care, but that time as a caregiver meant I wasn't earning income. Income that would have helped grow my business and sustain me as I grow older.

If I had been able to contribute to a fund for solo entrepreneurs as laid out in H.66, an act relating to paid family and medical leave insurance, there would have been funds available for me to draw on when I could not work. A paid family and medical leave program would have provided economic security for myself and other women owned businesses like mine. Please fund the start-up costs for a universal, state-run paid family and medical leave program with \$37 million in one-time funds. Thank You.