

To: Chair Sirotkin and the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs  
From: Carrie Carpenter of Montpelier

I'm here today to express my support for the Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance bill, H.196, to encourage the committee to strengthen it in a few ways, and to encourage you to prioritize making sure this bill makes it to the Governor by the end of the legislative session.

In November 2016, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Shortly after my diagnosis, I had a mastectomy. Between the surgery and complications, I was out of work for 6 weeks. During this time I used all of my paid time off and had no disability insurance available to me. Following my surgery, there were - and still are - endless appointments for scans, x-rays, physical therapy, blood work, and more. I had chemotherapy for 20 weeks, and then radiation therapy 5 days a week for 5 ½ weeks. On top of that, I still have an infusion I have to get for a full year.

Fortunately I work for an employer who has let me take all the unpaid time I need for my treatment, but I am a single mother of a teenage daughter and am dealing with expensive medical-related costs. Every dollar counts, and I can't afford to take a single day off unpaid. So, while undergoing chemotherapy and radiation treatment, I worked extra hours to make up missed work time so I didn't lose any income, rather than getting the doctor-recommended rest I needed to recover. I even cancelled some of my doctor and physical therapy appointments because I couldn't afford to miss the time from work.

If Vermont had a family and medical leave insurance program in place that – like the five other states that have these programs – and included time off intermittently for personal medical procedures and recovery, I would have been able to take time to recover during my chemotherapy and radiation treatment without having to suffer financially as a result.

I want to ensure this bill includes personal medical leave. Without this, many Vermonters like myself will continue to struggle when unexpected illness arise. I also hope you will consider extending the leave time to twelve weeks. When long-term illnesses occur, ongoing treatment is needed over a period of time, and having access to paid intermittent leave during this time can be a life changer.

Paid Family and Medical Leave would be a win-win for Vermont families and employers. Vermonters would be able to deal with unexpected health issues or medical emergencies without having to leave their jobs or suffer financially as a result. And employers would know that all of their employees are insured in the event a health emergency arises.

Sincerely,  
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