

My name is Faye Longo, I am a native Vermonter and a resident of East Barre. I am also a full time employee, a college student, a daughter, sister, and a single mom.

I'm here to express my full support for the paid family leave bill, to encourage you to ensure personal illness/injury leave is included, and extend the weeks to as close to 12 as possible.

Female-headed households with dependents are consistently the poorest households not just in Vermont but across our nation and the world! More and more women are entering the workforce everyday and more and more of them are single parents or primary caregivers of some sort, this is a pattern that is not going to change anytime soon.

Women are more likely to be the primary caregiver not only for their children but for other family members as well; aging mothers and fathers, their partners, etc. Those who have enjoyed a more affluent lifestyle and upbringing may not recognize the huge benefits a bill like this would afford women and families in VT but we are the very people who are navigating these challenges every day.

I'm sure many people here will speak to the fact that our current society is set up to support men in the workforce, to support two parent households, but the nuclear family model has changed and female headed households now outnumber them significantly. Vermont has always been a state of firsts but when it comes to supporting women and families we have failed. We must start passing legislation like House Bill 196 to turn this grave injustice around. And to show our commitment to supporting women and their families in our state.

I can speak from personal experience as a single mother and as a woman in general. My father passed away last year, my mother has battled cancer most of my life, and I'm the sole caregiver for my daughter who has had medical issues. There is not anytime in my life when this bill would not have benefited me.

Last year my father who lives in CT had a terrible car accident, he was in ICU then hospice until passing away nearly a month later. I traveled to see him when he first had his accident and took unpaid time off to be with him and care for him in his final weeks of life. It took me a long time to get caught up financially after losing just that few weeks of pay - but I had no choice. I had to choose debt and significant financial hardship in order to care for my dad, during a time when I should have been mourning the loss of my father.

Paid family leave would have helped me in more ways than I can express.

Again, I implore you to pass this bill and to ensure personal illness/injury leave is included, and extend the weeks to as close to 12 as possible.

Thank you, Faye Longo