

Testimony in Favor of H. 196

Submitted to Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs on April 10, 2018

I am writing in support of H.196, an Act Relating to Paid Family Leave.

I believe passage of this legislation and the Minimum Wage bill are essential to Vermont's workforce development and economic growth.

I write this having just come back from taking two weeks away from my business to care for my sister who had been in an accident. I can't recover the income lost. And I write this remembering all too well the economic hardship of leaving a job I loved because my Mother needed my help. And I couldn't both care for her and my young son, and work. The non-profit I worked for could not afford to provide me with any paid leave. So I left, and some 20 years later I still feel the economic effects of leaving that job.

I have felt for years that Vermont and the United States needed some sort of paid family and medical leave. The majority of workers can't afford to take unpaid leave.

My nephew works at a job that pays him \$12 an hour. He has 3 lovely daughters that his wife cares for when he is working. His oldest daughter was hit by a car while she was riding a bike last week. The Mother couldn't leave her two other children, so my nephew took time off from work to be with his daughter in the hospital. Thankfully she was able to come home that evening. Their income is low enough that they have state help for housing and food. But he can't recover the day's worth of income lost when he was at the hospital. Or any income lost if one of his other daughters, or he himself should require hospitalization

With Paid Family Leave young Vermont workers who want to stay in the State would be financially able to do so. The combination of PFL, plus increases to minimum wage and childcare subsidies, would help young Vermont families create an economically stable life for themselves. And that combination would also help Vermont employers recruit more workers and bring new families into the state.

For new parents, PFL increases the chances that Mothers would be able to go back to their jobs after childbirth, which in turn, gives them more economic stability. Plus the employer will not have the expense of training and hiring a new employee. PFL means that Mothers would have more time with their young infants, and that would ease the burden on our overstretched childcare system.

No Vermont family is immune from sickness or accidents. Paid leave means Vermont workers of all ages would have peace of mind and a sense of stability knowing that if someone in the family should become ill they will be able to afford to take the time off to care for that family member. They will have income as they care for loved ones, and be secure in knowing they have job to go back to.

One more point, for years advocates have looked for ways to finance a paid family leave insurance program. I am delighted that the original bill created the FAMLI fund by asking both employees and employers to contribute. I believe that is the fairest way to finance the fund. I hope this committee will considering restoring the employer contribution.

Thank you for your willingness to listen to the public's views on H.196. I hope you will consider recommending Senate passage of this legislation. It will be a great tool for employers recruiting workers from out of state, and provide economic stability and peace of mind for current Vermont workers.

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