

**Testimony of Cary Brown, Executive Director, Vermont Commission on Women
Senate Committee on Finance
February 19, 2025**

Re: S51, an act relating to the Vermont unpaid caregiver tax credit

Good afternoon. My name is Cary Brown and I'm the Executive Director of the Vermont Commission on Women. We are an independent state agency working to advance rights and opportunities for women and girls in Vermont. In that capacity we:

- act as advisor and information source for legislative and executive branches and other policy makers on issues affecting women
- serve as an educational resource by conducting research, producing publications, and coordinating events
- bring together diverse groups and engage in partnerships to consider issues of gender equity
- provide information and referrals to the public on matters related to women and families

Our work is guided by a collection of policy statements that are adopted by the full Commission and periodically reviewed and updated. The policy statement that guides my testimony today is one that has stood since 2001, and while some of the details may need to be updated, in its essence it rings as true today as it did a quarter century ago:

The Vermont Commission on Women supports legislation, policies, programs, and initiatives that provide support of family caregivers, promote alternative care situations, support long-term financial planning, and support reform of Medicare to focus on preventative services rather than loss of health in order to address the growing care needs of our aging population.

Many of you have probably heard us speak of the gender wage gap, which reflects the fact that overall women continue to earn less money than men do. There are multiple intersecting factors that cause this, but one of the most significant ones is the fact that women are disproportionately called on to shoulder unpaid family caregiving responsibilities that interfere with their full earning potential.

The Nobel Prize-winning economist Claudia Goldin speaks of the impact on the wage gap of what she terms "greedy work," noting that "the individual who puts in overtime, weekend time, or evening time will earn a lot more — so much more that, even on an hourly basis, the person is earning more."¹ Caregiving work can make this difficult or impossible to do, and when women do more of this unpaid labor, their economic security suffers.

- Globally, women spend 3.2 times as much time as men on unpaid care work²

¹ "Career and Family: Women's Century-long Journey Toward Equity" (2021) by Claudia Goldin

² ILO, [Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work](#) (2018)

- A recent survey of caregivers in the U.S. found that 1 in 3 have been unable to save for emergencies (36%) or retirement (30%) due to their caregiving responsibilities³
- American women are three times as likely as men to retire early to provide care for an ill spouse or aging parent⁴
- Black and Latinx caregivers, a majority of whom are women, disproportionately experience income loss and other forms of economic hardship linked to care⁵

The results of this on women's economic conditions are powerful, and by turn the impact on our entire economy is impacted.

- The most recent statistics from the Vermont Department of Labor show that while women are 50% of the workforce in the state, their earnings are only 75% of men's.⁶ This is a much lower ratio than is often quoted for the wage gap, and this is because the higher ratio is only looking at full-time workers, whereas when part-time workers are factored in, women's earnings drop. Women are much more likely to work part-time, and much more likely to cite family caregiving responsibilities as the reason for doing so.
- Globally, the economic value of unpaid care work has \$11 trillion, with women's unpaid care accounting for \$8 trillion of that sum⁷
- In the United States, a 2024 estimate put the economic value of unpaid care in the U.S. alone as \$1 trillion, with women accounting for two-thirds of it⁸

All of the economic impacts of unpaid caregiving labor are compounded by the lack of paid leave for caregiving. All but six other countries in the world provide paid leave for care of an infant,⁹ and most high-income countries also provide paid leave to care for a seriously ill child, spouse, or parent.¹⁰

A tax credit for unpaid caregiving, while not a way to replace lost wages, is nonetheless a very important step in recognizing the value that unpaid care work brings to our entire economy, and a valuable tool for acknowledging the undue financial impact the work has on people who are often the least able to afford it.

³ Pivotal Ventures and the Bipartisan Policy Center, [Voter Sentiment on Caregiving in the U.S.](#) (2024)

⁴ AARP, [The Economic Impact of Supporting Working Family Caregivers](#) (2021)

⁵ AARP Family Caregiving and National Alliance for Caregiving. ["Caregiving in the U.S.: 2020"](#) (2020)

⁶ [ELMI Earnings and Jobs by Industry and Sex - Vermont Department of Labor](#)

⁷ ILO, [Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work](#) (2018)

⁸ National Partnership for Women and Families, [Americans' Unpaid Caregiving is Worth More than \\$1 Trillion Annually – and Women are Doing Two-Thirds of The Work](#) (2024)

⁹ [WORLD](#)

¹⁰ Heymann, Sprague & Raub, [Equality Within Our Lifetimes](#) (UC Press, 2022)