

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
WITNESS LIST**

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004

**CHAIRMAN PHIL MENDELSON
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
ANNOUNCES A PUBLIC HEARING**

on

Bill 21-415, Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

on

**Thursday, February 11, 2016
4:00 p.m., Council Chambers, John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004**

WITNESS LIST

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------|--|
| 1. | Rachel Dubin | Public Witness |
| 2. | Justino Gomez | Member, Many Languages One Voice |
| 3. | Alonzo Guardado | Member, Many Languages One Voice |
| 4. | Dalia Catalan | Member, Many Languages One Voice |
| 5. | Delvone Michael | Executive Director, DC Working Families |
| 6. | Margaret Singleton | Interim President/CEO, DC Chamber of Commerce |
| 7. | Kathy E. Hollinger | President & CEO, Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington |
| 8. | Elizabeth Davis | President, Washington Teachers Union |
| 9. | Patria Harrell | Public Witness |
| 10. | Sasha Bruce | Senior Vice President of Campaigns and Strategies, NARAL |
| 11. | Melanie L. Campbell | President/CEO, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation |
| 12. | Ariel Cetrone | Public Witness |
| 13. | Victoria Hougham | Public Witness |

14. Dominique Lawrence Public Witness
15. Dr. Yanira Cruz President/CEO, National Hispanic Council on Aging
16. Roger Horowitz Owner, Pleasant Pops
17. Nicole Coomber Public Witness
18. Travis Ballie Public Witness
19. Daniel Turner Public Witness
20. Chanda Davis Public Witness
21. Kristin Sekerci Public Witness
22. Howard White Public Witness
23. Zeke Reich Public Witness
24. Amanda Steinberg Public Witness
25. Jessica Lott Public Witness
26. Lindsay DuPertuis Public Witness
27. Sabrina Sussman Public Witness
28. Elizabeth Kanter Public Witness
29. Morgan Gross Public Witness
30. Ruti Berner-Kadish Public Witness
31. Ke'sha Scrivner Public Witness
32. Kory Goodwine Public Witness
33. Aaron Fanwick Public Witness
34. Laura Brown Executive Director, First Shift Justice Project
35. Dawain Arrington Public Witness
36. Dr. Morgan Leighton Public Witness

37. Mark Lee Executive Director, D.C. Nightlife Hospitality Association
38. Michael Salamon Public Witness
39. Abby Levine Public Witness
40. Mary Laura Calhoun Public Witness
41. Jessica Champagne Public Witness
42. Sara Alcid Associate Campaign Director, MomsRising
43. Luc Brami Principal, Gelberg Signs
44. Dr. Cicley Fadel Pediatrician, DC Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
45. Angelo Thompson Public Witness
46. Andrew Hunt Principal, AGH Strategies
47. Geoff Silverstein Founding Partner, Friendly Design Co.
48. Thi-Lai Simpson Public Witness
49. Earl Pass Public Witness
50. Julie Yoder Owner, The English Teacher Collective
51. Marcia St. Hilaire-Finn Managing Director, Bright Start Childcare
52. Shira Bergstein Public Witness
53. Sally Kram Director of Public and Governmental Affairs, Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area
54. Danielle Lewis Partner, Springboard Partners, LLC
55. Naomi Shachter Public Witness
56. Doug Foote Public Witness
57. Sharon Goldtzvik Founder/CEO, Uprise
58. Robert Coomber Public Witness

59. Julia Judish
Outside Counsel to the American Society of Association Executives
60. Sherice Muhammad
Public Witness
61. Josephine Kalipeni
Director of Policy and Partnerships, Caring Across Generations
62. Tania Lown-Hecht
Public Witness
63. Russell Snyder
Vice President, DC Coalition of Disability Service Providers
64. Kirk McCauley
Director of Member Relations and Government Affairs, WMDA Service Station Association
65. Emily Goodstein
Owner, Emily Goodstein Photography
66. Matthew Erickson
Founding Partner, 76 Words
67. Veronica Brown
Public Witness
68. Sade Moonsammy-Gray
Navigator and State Outreach Coordinator, Young Invincibles
69. Valencia Campbell
Leader of DC Action Team, 9to5 - National Association of Working Women
70. Norma Byrd
Public Witness
71. Beth Henson
Chief Executive Officer, Azure LLC
72. Jordan Bleck
Public Witness
73. Farah Fosse
Public Witness
74. Sean Siperstein
Public Witness
75. Joe Leightner
Regional Vice President, Laz Parking
76. Jessie Blumin
Public Witness
77. Daniel Michelson-Horowitz
Public Witness
78. Daniel Mauer
Public Witness
79. Marjorie Middleton
Public Witness

80. Hannah Lantos Public Witness
81. Emily Schondelmyer Public Witness
82. Ashe McGovern Policy Analyst, Center for American Progress
83. Jeronique Bartley Public Witness
84. Christine Tschiderer Fellow, Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs
85. Preston Van Vliet National Campaign Organizer, Family Values @ Work
86. Michelle McGrain Public Witness
87. Aaron Litz Public Witness
88. Susanna Murley Public Witness
89. Kelsey Ryland Policy Manager, Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity (URGE)
90. Kirk Wilson Public Witness
91. Hollande Levinson Public Witness
92. Danielle Paulson Public Witness
93. Eugene Puryear Director of Field Operations, Justice First
94. Sara Fatell Owner, Grassroots Gourmet
95. Rabbi Elizabeth Richman Program Director, Jews United for Justice
96. Joanna Blotner Campaign Manager, DC Paid Family Leave Campaign
97. Ramesh Butani President, HRGM Corp.
98. Zach Komes Roosevelt Institute, George Washington University
99. David Wasserstein Public Witness
100. Jane Emily Hayashi Public Witness

101. Willie Lucas Jr. Public Witness
102. Hannah Kane Worker Justice Organizer, Many Languages One Voice
103. Rev. Robert Keithan Public Witness
104. Adam Graubart Roosevelt Institute, George Washington University
105. Scott Magnuson President, Capitol Hill Chamber of Commerce
106. Thomas Marr Owner, Pete's New Haven Style Pizza
107. Jeremiah Lowery Ombudsman, DC for Democracy
108. Andrew Kline General Counsel, Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington
109. Camille Harris Public Witness
110. Emily Hecht-McGowan Interim Executive Director, Family Equality Council
111. Kim Mitchell Public Witness
112. Matthew Hanson Campaign Director, DC Working Families
113. Ris Lacoste Chef/Owner, Ris DC
114. Greg Casten Partner, Tony and Joe's Seafood Place
115. Stewart Newbold Director of Operations, Jose Andres ThinkFood Group
116. Ed Lazere Executive Director, DC Fiscal Policy Institute
117. Linda Benesch Public Witness
118. Donald Stuart Cameron Public Witness
119. Boo Kim Director of Operations, Passion Food Hospitality
120. Michael Visser Owner, Flying Fish Coffee and Tea

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| 121. | Hannah Weilbacher | Public Witness |
| 122. | Marcel Estevez | Public Witness |
| 123. | Ellen Valentino | Executive Vice President, Mid-Atlantic Petroleum Distributors Association |
| 124. | Robert Materazzi | Owner, Shelly's Backroom |
| 125. | Ruth Gresser | Owner/Chef, Pizzeria Paradiso |
| 126. | Malik Darby | Operations Manager, 7-Eleven |
| 127. | Solomon Beyene | Public Witness |
| 128. | Bobby Martz | 7-Eleven |

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015

February 11, 2016

Submitted to the Committee of the Whole

Testimony of Rachel Deborah Dubin, MA

in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

Good evening, Chairman Mendelson and members of the DC Council. Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act. My name is Rachel Dubin, and I live in Ward 2 in Foggy Bottom. I am a working professional and have lived in DC for 17 years.

I am profoundly deaf and hear with cochlear implants. My mother, Esther Dubin, was my champion, my best friend. She fought for me to be mainstreamed and to listen and speak.

Without her I wouldn't be where I am today or be able to communicate orally. In 2008, she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's at the age of 63. One of the first things that went was language, which was devastating because we had shared so many wonderful, long conversations.

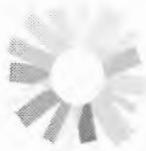
My father and I were lucky to be able to keep her in our family home in Baltimore, where she died peacefully on July 13, 2014. I work full-time and my sick leave and vacation time are all in one Paid Time Off pot, so it was impossible for me to take any time off from work to travel back and forth to help out. Alzheimer's care is very emotionally taxing. I love my job and want to be able to do well by my workplace, which means I have to tend to my own health, too.

I am an only child, so one day I may need to care for my father. That means I would need to take considerable time from work. With 16 weeks of paid leave, I could look after myself AND my

father without worrying about my job or my paycheck. A few weeks of vacation time isn't enough to actually take care of a sick parent - and care-taking is not a vacation!

Of course, this situation would also demand that the new draft bill be revised to expand the definition of family. I find it unacceptable that my father would not be counted as my family! I hope that this new and narrow definition of family is an oversight, and that the Council will remember that our parents, siblings, grandparents, and adult children are family members deserving of time and care.

The Fifth Commandment says to "honor your father and mother." With that expanded definition of family, the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015 would allow all of us to perform this *mitzvah*, or commandment. Therefore, I urge you to support this bill, for *all* our families. Thank you for your time.



many languages
one voice

TESTIMONY OF JUSTINO GOMEZ
Public Witness
Member, Many Languages One Voice
UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT

Committee of the Whole
February 11, 2016

Good afternoon to everyone. My name is Justino Gomez. I worked for 23 years in Stan's Restaurant. Unfortunately, I developed a problem with my thumb. I asked my employer for permission to take time off work for an operation. I was only out for 6 weeks to recover. Thank God, the operation went well. But when I returned to my job I was fired.

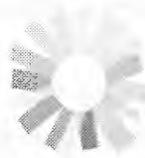
This was a surprise for me. My employer had no compassion. For this reason I have suffered emotionally. My family depends on me. I adopted a child when she was four years old, and now she is 19 and I am struggling to make ends meet because she is in college and I am only working a part-time job.

If there had been a law like the Universal Paid Leave Act, my situation would have changed. I would be in a better situation and my family too. I hope that this can change and that you help us all.

Muy buenas tardes a todos ustedes. Mi nombre es Justino Gomez. Yo trabajaba por 23 años en Stan's Restaurant. Lamentablemente, me enfermé del dedo pulgar. Pedí permiso a mi empleador para que me operaran. Solo estuve 6 semanas fuera para recuperarme. Gracias a Dios quede bien de mi operacion. Pero al regresar de nuevo a mi trabajo fui despedido.

Eso para mi fue una sorpresa. Mi empleador no tuvo compasión. Por eso mismo he sufrido emocionalmente. Mi familia depende de mi. Yo adopte una niña cuando tenía 4 años y ahora tiene 19 años y casi el dinero no me alcanza porque ella está en la universidad y solo trabajo un part time.

Y si hubiera una ley como la Acta de Ausencia Pagada Universal, mi situación cambiaría. Yo estuviera en otra situación y mi familia también. Espero que todo pueda cambiar y nos ayude a todos.



many languages
one voice

TESTIMONY OF ALONZO GUARDADO

Public Witness

Member, Many Languages One Voice

UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT

Committee of the Whole

February 11, 2016

My name is Alonzo Guardado, and I hurt my hand in an accident at the restaurant where I had worked for ten years. They told me that they would still pay me my paycheck regardless, but when I went to pick up my paycheck they told me that I would not be paid since I had not worked.

I found a lawyer so that I could defend my rights, but I don't see the lawyers making a difference. It's been seven months. During this time, I have not been able to work because of my condition and I have not had any income.

I have had to seek out loans, to pay for my rent and food, and I don't know what to do anymore. Because many people have now become annoyed and don't want to help me out anymore. And nothing gets resolved. It's sad.

I don't see that there are laws out there to support me. With the Universal Paid Leave Act, I would have been able to have 16 weeks of income, and I would have been able to pay my rent and eat without worrying, very calmly. Please pass this bill for me and for all workers.

TESTIMONIO DE ALONZO GUARDADO
Testiga Publica
Miembro, Mil Idiomas Una Voz
ACTA DE AUSENCIA PAGADA UNIVERSAL

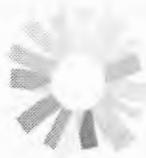
Comite del Consejo Municipal Completo
11 febrero, 2016

Mi nombre es Alonzo Guardado, y yo tuve un accidente con mi mano en el restaurante donde había trabajado 10 años. Me dijeron de que yo tenía mi cheque igual. Pero después, cuando yo regresé a traer mi cheque, me dijeron que yo no tenía cheque, porque yo no había trabajado.

Fue cuando yo puse abogado para reclamar mis derechos. Pero yo miro que mis abogados no están mirando nada. Esto ya lleva 7 meses. Durante este tiempo, por esa enfermedad no he podido trabajar y no he tenido ningun ingreso.

Yo he estado buscando dinero prestado, para comida y renta, y ya no hallo como hacer. Por que ya muchas personas se han molestado y no quieren ayudar mas. Y no me resuelven nada. Esta triste.

Yo no miro leyes para mi. Si estuviera la Ley de Ausencia Médica y Familiar Pagada, yo hubiera podido tener 16 semanas de ingreso, y hubiera podido pagar mi renta y comer sin preocupación, muy tranquilamente. Favor que aprueban esa propuesta de ley para mi y todos los trabajadores.



many languages
one voice

TESTIMONY OF DALIA CATALAN
Public Witness
Member, Many Languages One Voice
UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT

Committee of the Whole
February 11, 2016

My name is Dalia Catalan, and I live in Ward 4. My story is that I worked in a hotel in DC, and I had been working there for four years when I became pregnant.

When I was 8 months pregnant, they called me and told me not to come to work anymore - unpaid vacation. I would have wanted to keep working until I couldn't work anymore, in my own opinion.

Eight days after my son, Carlitos Chajon, was born, they called me into work. I told them no because it was very soon. So they said that I should call them when I was ready to work.

After exactly one month, on a Saturday, they called me and told me that the next day I had to go to work and that if I didn't I wouldn't have a job anymore. They only gave me a month with my son and to recover.

My husband wasn't working at that time. I had to go to work.

Then my son started to get sick. I had to ask for permission to take off of work because the doctor said that she had to see him every three days because he was on the verge of developing asthma.

One day, I asked for permission to take him to the doctor, and they gave me permission but took me off the schedule for a whole week. On Monday they called me and told me not to come into work, that I shouldn't even go to the hotel because they would not let me enter.

My jaw dropped when they told me that I shouldn't even go to work, because I needed the job and it was because of an illness that I'd tried to take off. I also have a daughter in Guatemala to

support, and my son was sick. It affects you a lot, because here we have to pay rent, bills, and food.

In my case, if the Universal Paid Leave Act had been in effect, it would have helped a lot, because it would have helped us to cover the cost of our necessities, so we wouldn't have had to go through the pains that happen when you don't have work or you have to take unpaid time off, and it's not easy to find work.

I hope that you support us so that we can make this bill a reality.

TESTIMONIO DE DALIA CATALAN
Testiga Publica
Miembro, Mil Idiomas Una Voz
ACTA DE AUSENCIA PAGADA UNIVERSAL

Comite del Consejo Municipal Completo
11 febrero, 2016

Mi nombre es Dalia Catalán, y yo vivo en el distrito 4, y mi historia es de que trabajaba en un hotel en DC, ya tenía 4 años de trabajar allí cuando salí embarazada.

Cuando tuve 8 meses de embarazo, me llamaron y dijeron que ya no fuera a trabajar - vacaciones sin sueldo. Yo hubiera querido seguir trabajando hasta que no pudiera según mi propia opinión.

A los ocho días después de que había nacido el niño, Carlitos Chajon, me llamaron para que me fuera a trabajar. Yo les dije que no porque era muy pronto. Entonces vinieron y dijeron que cuando yo estaba lista que les llamara.

Cabal el dia que cumpli el mes, un dia sabado, me llamaron y me dijeron que el dia siguiente me tenía que presentar a trabajar y si no, que me iba a quedar sin trabajo. Me dieron solamente un mes con el nino y para recuperarme.

Mi esposo no estaba trabajando en este tiempo. Tuve la necesidad de irme a trabajar.

Cuando ya tenía un año el niño se empezó a enfermar. Me tocaba pedir permiso porque la doctora dijo que tenía que estarlo chequeando cada 3 días porque tenía punto de asma.

De repente, pedí permiso para llevarlo en donde la doctora, y me dieron el permiso pero me quitaron toda la semana de trabajo. El dia lunes me llamaron y me dijeron que ya no me presentara a trabajar, que ni llegara al hotel porque no me iban a permitir entrar.

Yo me quedé hasta con la boca abierta cuando me dijeron que ni me presentara a trabajar, porque yo necesitaba el trabajo y fue por necesidad de enfermedad que pedí permiso. Yo tambien tengo una hija en Guatemala para apoyar, y el niño estaba enfermo. Si afecta bastante, porque uno tiene aquí que pagar la renta, los biles, la comida, etc.

En mi caso, si estuviera en efecto la **Acta de Ausencia Familiar y Médica Pagada**, habría ayudado mucho, porque eso nos ayuda a cubrir las necesidades, no le pasa a uno las penas de cuando uno no tiene trabajo o toma vacaciones obligadas, y no es tan fácil hallar trabajo.

Que nos apoyen a que se haga realidad esta propuesta.



Testimony of Margaret Singleton
Interim President & CEO, DC Chamber of Commerce
Before the Committee of the Whole, on February 11, 2016
on
Bill 21-415, the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

Good Afternoon Chairman Mendelson and members of the Council. My name is Margaret Singleton, and I am Interim President and CEO of the DC Chamber of Commerce. I am pleased to be here today to testify on behalf of the DC Chamber's membership and the hundreds of thousands of workers they employ. The DC Chamber of Commerce believes in job creation and growth as well as working collaboratively with all of our stakeholders including DC government, to continue to make the District of Columbia a great place to live, work, play and do business.

The Chamber appreciates the efforts the Chairman and Committee have made to address the comments and concerns that have been shared regarding Bill 21-415, the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. The draft committee print, released on Monday, makes several amendments to the bill from the introduced version. Specifically, the draft committee print narrows some of the formerly broad definitions, removes the amendment to D.C. FMLA that would have changed when an eligible employee could access D.C. FMLA privileges; provides income replacement at 50% or 90% of salary depending on the employees earnings, and mandates the use of accrued sick leave before paid family and medical leave benefits can be accessed. Despite these changes, the Chamber believes there is room for additional improvement to the bill.

Upon an initial review of the discussion draft, we note that it still creates a new paid time off entitlement program administered by the government; it still makes the District of Columbia less competitive and attractive for businesses; it still supports itself by enforcing a maximum 1 percent tax on DC businesses; and it does not credit the businesses who already offer paid leave and benefit programs equal to or greater than what the program mandates. The bill still poses challenges administratively, and raises a few questions for us because the intent of some definitions, like "family member," are still unclear. With that said, we would like the Committee to consider further how the bill interacts with employer provided programs in existence; consider how for example, the definition of "covered employee" could be interpreted in our jurisdiction for several types of companies and employees; and consider what would happen under the definition of "retaliation" in the event an employer unknowingly makes an action before being notified that a claim has been made. These concerns, the bill's costs, and its negative impact on the business community have yet to be fully addressed. We understand that this revised draft is one step the Committee has taken, and there will likely be more, as such, we would like to continue working with the Committee throughout this process to see our concerns addressed and our questions answered.

We believe that any universal paid leave program should be built on existing programs, and in accordance with current laws and policies (e.g. Accrued Sick and Safe Act, D.C. FMLA, FMLA) versus enforcing a separate all-for-one universal entitlement program that imposes financial constraints on DC businesses; if the program proceeds beyond our concerns, we would want the Committee to consider cost sharing options, further steps to prevent fraud, and abuse, and we would like to discuss how the proposed legislation will be improved to support local employers who are small, as well as, businesses of all sizes who already provide paid leave benefits at this level or greater than this proposal.

The DC Chamber of Commerce and its members want to ensure that their employees are able to take care of themselves and their families. We consider our employees our most valuable assets and resources.

Thank you for your time and consideration to my testimony. I welcome any questions you may have and the DC Chamber and I look forward to collaborating with you to improve the Act to make the District an even better place to work and do business for everyone.

Committee of the Whole
Hearing on “Bill 21-415, Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015”
February 11, 2016

Testimony of Kathy E. Hollinger, President and CEO
Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington

Good evening Chairman Mendelson, Council Members and Council staff. I am Kathy Hollinger, President and CEO of Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington (RAMW).

RAMW members pride themselves on taking care of their people and employees and while we would like to support the proposed Universal Paid Leave Act, because we value the importance of a family-work-life balance, we cannot support it at this time as it is currently written. We understand that what is before us today is a discussion draft, but it begs many questions that cannot be answered until the CFO weighs in and a full-scale analysis is done of the actual costs to enact a successful program.

Similar to our first testimony, we are concerned with the true costs of a Universal Paid Leave program, and believe there must be a systematic approach that is grounded in research from economic experts. As the official trade association for the foodservice industry, we must speak up and voice our concerns with legislation that impacts business operations, as well as expenses. We fear that because the true cost of the program is unknown at this time so is the true cost to the business.

On multiple occasions we have testified before you about the unintended consequences of legislative layering. In most cases restaurants absorb the additional costs resulting from legislative mandates but at some point they will also have to share costs with their employees, which could mean reducing staff size, reducing non required benefits, or reducing the rate of wage increases. Costs will also be pushed to the customer in the form of higher menu prices, but these higher prices will likely not increase revenues, as budgets for dining and entertainment typically remained fixed, meaning patrons will dine out less frequently.

Restaurants are the ^{second} largest private employer in the District and between 2010 and 2014 added jobs at an average annual rate of 5.6 percent, however that number stalled to 0.1 percent in 2015—a staggering decrease when you consider how many restaurants were in the District in 2010 versus today. This statistic should not be taken lightly and is directly correlated to the cumulative affect legislative layering has had on local restaurants.

Restaurants operate with razor thin profit margins with a national average at 4%, and while a 1% payroll tax may theoretically seem like a small amount, in practice it is significant. In its current form, the discussion draft states that until the program is deemed to be sufficiently funded there will be a blanket 1% payroll tax, however there is no indication of when this program will be fully funded, which means no end in sight for this disproportionately high tax. We oppose this approach, as it does not take into account the diverse landscape of businesses in the District, and actual earnings of employees. Any tax imposed should be based on business size, profits, employment, and individual earnings. As it is written, the tax imposition is shrouded in uncertainty and unknowns.

We are at a difficult crossroads, as we want to provide meaningful feedback, however we are not able to effectively do so as the draft discussion has not been scored by the CFO, and the true cost has not been determined. It is stated in the proposed legislation that the tax will

not exceed a 1% payroll tax, however we question the reality of this commitment as the start date of this program and overall budget have not been determined. It is crucial that if this program suffers deficient funding that the burden does not fall on the business community to bridge the gap, but instead benefits are reduced.

You will hear from some of our members who are testifying later this evening, and will speak to exact costs to their business, and how they adjust business operations to absorb additional legislation.

We look forward to continuing to work with you on the Universal Paid Leave Amendment Act, however we cannot support the legislation in its current form.

**Testimony of Elizabeth Davis, President, Washington Teachers Union
Supporting the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
February 11, 2016**

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. My name is Elizabeth Davis, and I am president of the Washington Teachers Union. Prior to that, I was a teacher in the District of Columbia Public Schools for many years.

When people who work cannot afford to take the time they need to care for a new baby, recover from an illness or help a family member struggling with health issues, our families lose and our communities lose. I support paid leave as a mother, aunt, teacher, coworker and friend. No one should have to choose between providing for their family and caring for their family.

Many critics see paid leave as an issue impacting only working moms and dads. But it is so much more than that. The teachers and paraprofessionals that make up the Washington Teachers Union see how a lack of paid leave adds to the stress and turmoil on the students they serve and their families. Students who worry about sick parents going to work or who shoulder care-taking responsibilities because their adult family members cannot, are less able to excel in the classroom because they are very distracted while at school, or worse, miss school. Therefore, we also should see this bill as a way to support our students and learning environments.

Our teachers work very hard to narrow the achievement gap in our city. Newborn babies that spend very little time with a parent have poorer educational and health outcomes. By giving new parents time with their babies, we might help remove one factor contributing to the achievement gap.

I also think about this bill for the teachers themselves, who are DC government employees. The current proposals keep DC government workers out of this new program and leave them with worse benefits and without medical coverage. Why shouldn't they have the same benefits as everyone else?

Finally, I applaud the council for setting a wage replacement rate that actually replaces wages, and makes taking leave affordable for all families that to do so. Please do not go any lower than the 90% in the revised draft. The last thing that our city needs is a benefit that in practice creates another group of haves and have-nots.

On behalf of the Washington Teachers Union, I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of paid leave and look forward to making paid leave a reality for DC families.

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
PUBLIC HEARING ON
B21-0415:
UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015
Testimony of Patria Harrell**

Good morning, my name is Patria Harrell. I was born and raised in DC and I'm a resident of Ward 8. I've worked as a part-time janitor at 200 Independence Ave SW for the last five years. I'm a single parent of three kids – ages 1, 9 and 11. When I was on maternity leave, I didn't get paid. I got very far behind on all of my bills: the rent, utilities, car insurance, food and my electricity was cut off!

I still can't keep up with my bills after all this time. I was getting eviction notices even after I came back to work. It's been really challenging. I had to go on food stamps. I lived in public housing, what some refer to as the projects. The area is not safe and I lived in a unit that's not safe for kids.

I don't just speak for myself. There are a lot of single parent families in the District. Paid family leave would make a really big difference for parents like me. How else will we be able to survive? How are you supposed to be able to take care of yourself or your kids for 3 months?

Please pass the Universal Paid Leave Act. Passing this bill, you can save a lot of families a lot of money and heartbreak.

Thank you for your time.

Testimony in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
Testimony of NARAL Pro-Choice America
Senior Vice President for Campaigns and Strategy, Sasha Bruce

Good afternoon Councilmembers. Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015, and special thanks to Chairman Mendelson for continuing the conversations on this important legislation.

My name is Sasha Bruce, I have lived in the District for nearly 20 years, and currently reside with my husband and my 20-month old daughter in Mt. Pleasant in Ward 1. I also have the privilege of serving as the Senior Vice President for Campaigns and Strategy at NARAL Pro-Choice America here in the District.

NARAL Pro-Choice America is one of the few businesses in the District that offers employees a paid leave program. So, when I gave birth to my daughter, Petra, I was able to take 10 weeks away from work to bond with her without fear of losing my job or my wages.

I am here to speak to you on behalf of NARAL Pro-Choice America in advocating for the passage of this paid leave bill, but also on behalf of myself and my family as DC residents and voters. This policy is important to our members and it's important to our community. NARAL Pro-Choice America's mission is to guarantee every woman the right to make personal decisions regarding their full range of reproductive freedom without interference. We strongly believe that paid family leave is a critical component of family planning because without it, a woman does not have the time needed to heal from the delivery, the family does not have time to bond with the baby—which is particularly important to appropriate development--and the family faces greater challenges in creating a stable and nurturing home for the child. While we appreciate the twelve weeks proposed, we hoped that this program would allow us to provide 16 weeks of paid leave, which, while still less than the optimal recommended time, gets us closer to giving parents the time they need to care for new babies and make sure they are healthy and thriving.

We also know, as do many of you, that family planning is inextricably linked to economic opportunity. A woman cannot realize her full economic potential if she and her family are put into financial risk or are forced into a place of job vulnerability simply for starting a family. All D.C. families should be given the peace of mind that my husband and I were given, and this Universal Paid Leave Act would do just that.

I ask that you support this commonsense paid leave proposal, and give families the stability they need. I'm proud to call DC home because with proposals like this, I know that we're all in this together. Through your action, we can show the rest of the country that realizing paid family leave is simply the right and just way forward. Thank you.



Universal Paid Leave Act of 2016 (Bill 21-415):
An Important Policy for D.C. Families

Testimony Presented by

Sasha Bruce
Senior Vice President for Campaigns and Strategy

On Behalf of

NARAL Pro-Choice America

Council of the District of Columbia
Committee of the Whole

February 11, 2016

Members of the Committee of the Whole: I am honored to submit this testimony.

My name is Sasha Bruce and I have lived in the District for nearly 20 years. I live in Mt. Pleasant in Ward 1 with my husband and my 20-month old daughter, Petra. I also have the privilege of serving as the Senior Vice President for Campaigns and Strategy at NARAL Pro-Choice America here in the District, where we have over 10,000 supporters.

NARAL Pro-Choice America is one of the businesses in the District that already offers a paid leave program. When I gave birth to my daughter, Petra, I was able to use the leave I earned at NARAL plus the short-term disability childbirth benefit for a full 10 weeks of leave. I bonded with my daughter and adjusted to my family's 'new normal' without fear of losing my job or my wages. I am here to speak to you on behalf of NARAL Pro-Choice America in advocating for the passage of paid leave legislation, and also on behalf of myself and my family as D.C. residents. The legislation before you is an important start to the conversation of what universal paid leave looks like. Such a policy is important to NARAL's members and it's important to our community.

To give some background, NARAL Pro-Choice America's mission is to guarantee every woman the right to make personal decisions regarding her full range of reproductive freedom, without interference. To truly achieve that freedom, women and families need:

- access to contraception to prevent unintended pregnancy,
- access to legal abortion without stigma,
- and access to the tools that allow women and families to bear and raise healthy children – which can only be achieved with access to paid family leave.

Without paid leave, a woman does not have the time needed to heal from the delivery, the family does not have time to bond with the baby, and the family faces greater challenges in creating a stable and nurturing home for the child.

We know, as do many of you, that family planning is inextricably linked to economic opportunity. A woman cannot realize her full economic potential if by simply starting a family she is at risk for losing her job and forced into financial straits. All D.C. families should be given the peace of mind that my husband and I were given, and this Universal Paid Leave Act is a step in the right direction. You can make this policy even better by expanding the benefit to a full 16 weeks, and among other things, ensuring that all D.C. residents are covered.

We at NARAL are confident that the public supports such a policy because through volunteer tabling at the H. Street Festival, at the D.C. State Fair, and other local events, combined with our social media outreach, and simply talking to people at their doors in nearly every Ward in the city, we gathered over 1,500 signatures in support of paid family leave. We delivered petitions to every councilmember and heard countless stories from D.C. residents who believe the city needs to show leadership on this issue, and we couldn't agree more.

You've all heard the embarrassing statistic that among so-called advanced economy countries, the United States is the only country without a paid maternity leave program. And across the U.S., as well as here in D.C., working parents struggle to afford what is best for their families. More often than not, parents are forced to choose between paying their bills and staying home to bond with their infant during the critical, early months of a child's life. It's unacceptable for us to lag behind the rest of the world on such an important issue. Each of you has the opportunity to be a leader on paid leave— just like D.C. leads the way on so many other progressive policies.

I'm sure each of us agrees that every parent deserves quality time to nurture their children without the fear of financial instability. A paid family leave program would stop employers from denying new parents that precious time, and provide all families with the dignity of paid time off to care for children. When parents are forced to worry about where their paycheck will come from, instead of giving their children the building blocks for a healthy start, the whole family suffers, and here in D.C., when we cannot protect our citizenry, our whole community suffers.

I ask that you not only support this commonsense paid leave proposal, but strengthen it by ensuring:

- families be given a full 16 week benefit,
- all D.C. residents are eligible, and
- the full definition of "family" is used to ensure parity across programs.

Not only would this proposal help new parents care for their children, but it also helps businesses to maintain a knowledgeable, experienced workforce. The Universal Paid Leave Act will not harm D.C.'s businesses, but will strengthen the District's workforce. I'm proud to call D.C. home because with proposals like this, I know that we're all in this together. While this country falls behind the rest of the world in paid leave, when it comes to taking care of our residents and living up to the standards we set for ourselves as being pro-family, D.C. has the opportunity to be the standard bearers and lead the way. Through your action, we can show the rest of the country that realizing paid family leave is simply the right and just way forward.

Hearing on the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
District of Columbia City Council
Council Chambers, John A. Wilson Building, 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
President and CEO of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation and
Committee of the Whole
February 11, 2015
By Melanie L. Campbell
Convener of the Black Women's Roundtable

Good evening Council Chair Mendelson and Members of the Council, thank you for the opportunity to come before you this evening. I am Melanie Campbell, President and CEO of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (the National Coalition) and Convener of the Black Women's Roundtable (BWR).

The National Coalition is a 501(c)3, nonprofit, non-partisan organization dedicated to increasing civic engagement, leadership opportunities and voter participation in Black and underserved communities. We have affiliates and partners in 14 states across the country including Maryland, Virginia, and in the District of Columbia, where we have had our headquarters for 40 years.

The Black Women's Roundtable, established in 1983 as the National Coalition's women and girl's empowerment arm, is comprised of a diverse group of Black women civic leaders representing national, regional, state-based and international organizations and institutions.

I applaud the Council for its efforts to advance comprehensive paid leave legislation and I am an enthusiastic supporter of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2016, as introduced.

As An Employer: As a small nonprofit, the passage of Universal Paid Leave Act would afford the National Coalition the opportunity to support our employees in a truly meaningful way when they are confronted with personal illnesses or family emergencies. This is because when we pool together resources, the burden isn't completely on any one of us -- this type of insurance pool has proven results for employers. As an employer, I never want anyone to have to decide between the family they love and the job they need.

Offer a Progressive Wage Replacement Rate: Taking time away from work to support family life, recover from surgery or have a baby is difficult for all workers. But some have it even harder. In the District of Columbia, single women are the sole breadwinners in 37 percent of families. This number is even larger for Black women and Latinas. In these cases, workers without any other income or paid family leave are in a no-win situation. The proposed wage replacement rate structure that calls for 90% wage replacement up to double minimum wage

plus 50% of the average weekly wages in excess up to \$1,500 gives women and men -- especially those in low wage jobs-- the security that is required to respond to their families' needs. As the legislation advances, the Council must remain firm in protecting - or improving - this structure for wage replacements.

Impact on Economic Security and Income inequality: With nearly 12 years of experience and analyses in California and five years in New Jersey, we have gained some useful insights. Researchers in California and New Jersey have found that women who take family leave are more likely to see a wage increase and less likely to need public assistance or welfare. In fact, in New Jersey, women who had taken the leave were far more likely to be working nine to twelve months after the birth of their child than those women who had not. Likewise, these women were thirty-nine percent less likely to receive public assistance, and fifty-four per cent more likely to have seen an increase in their wages.

And in California, there is evidence of working men taking more time to bond with their children. Some 26 percent of claims taken to bond with a child were filed by dads in 2013, up from 17 percent in 2004 when the program started. As ten other states, counties and municipalities know, in the United States, paid family leave is not a question of if, but a question of when. In DC, I hope the questions are "how good and how soon." We have the opportunity to set the new standard for other legislative bodies to match - to provide our businesses, including mine, a competitive advantage over companies in other states and, most importantly, we have the opportunity to enable people to be good parents, caring family members and effective workers.

There is still work to do on the discussion print version of the Universal Family Leave Act but I urge the Council to prioritize this legislation and the Mayor to sign it.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to you.

Testimony of Ariel Wilson Cetrone

February 11, 2016

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015

Good Evening. My name is Ariel Cetrone. I am a resident of Ward 6 and the proud mother of a four-month-old son. I am testifying in favor of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

In March of 2013 I was hired by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, a DC government agency, to serve as their Arts Education Program Associate. Though my contract dictated the same full-time hours and responsibilities as the agency's full-time employees, the Commission classified me as a contractor and denied me benefits such as health insurance, sick time, unemployment insurance and maternity leave. A third of the agency's employees were classified this way.

In February of 2015, I notified agency leadership of my pregnancy and inquired about utilizing the same paid maternity leave benefits as my colleagues. I was denied paid leave due to my contractor status. I believed I was misclassified as a contractor and filed a complaint with the Department of Labor. The day after agency leadership found out about my complaint, I was terminated due to what they called a contract issue. I was eight months pregnant. This joyful time turned to one of fear. In addition to losing my fight for paid leave, I had also lost the three paychecks I was expecting before the birth of my son.

All city government employees should have access to the paid leave in this bill. I support the Universal Paid Leave Act because had it existed when I was still employed, I would have been able to apply for paid leave through a mechanism in the act that allows misclassified employees to claim funds. Furthermore, had I actually been self-employed, I could have paid into the fund annually to ensure paid leave. I urge the City Council to support both measures within the act and also encourage you to investigate rampant employee misclassification. All District residents deserve equal opportunity to survive in this, the most expensive US region to raise a family.

Thank you.

**Submitted by Dr. Yanira Cruz, President and CEO
National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA)**

Prepared for The Hearing on the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

Supporting Paid Family Leave

Dear Honorable Members of the Council:

As President and CEO of the National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA), I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. As the leading national organization working to improve the lives of Hispanic older adults, their families, and caregivers, NHCOA is a strong supporter of Paid Family Leave. Hispanic older adults and caregivers are a vulnerable population, but the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015 can help them age in better health and with a bit more economic security. During this testimony, I will first briefly describe the status of Hispanics, then I will discuss some of the reasons why the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015 would be so beneficial, and I will conclude by telling the story of a Hispanic older adult whose life would be changed for the better by having paid family leave.

Hispanic older adults face substantial challenges to aging in economic security and in the best possible health. Limited education and English speaking ability, combined with a lack of financial literacy means that many Hispanics enter old age with little in the way of savings. In 2014, 23.6% of Hispanics lived in poverty.ⁱ Without Social Security, this number would be more than doubled.ⁱⁱ Additionally, Hispanic older adults are more likely to rate their health status as “fair” or “poor” than the general population of older adults.ⁱⁱⁱ They are also less likely to receive the preventative care that can keep small health issues from becoming major complications. Overall, 80% of Hispanics lacked health insurance in 2014. Without access to preventative care, many entered old age already in poor health.^{iv}

Hispanics are hard workers, and this strong work ethic does not decline with age. Hispanics have one of the highest labor force participation rates.^v They are overrepresented, however, in low-paying, physically-demanding jobs that offer little in terms of health benefits or paid sick

days. When you are living paycheck to paycheck, a medical emergency can quickly lead to financial devastation. We particularly want to keep the wage replacement rate for the lowest paid workers at 90%-- which is already a bare minimum of affordability.

Washington, D.C. and its Hispanic population need the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. Many of the health and economic barriers that Hispanics face could be lowered by access to paid family leave. This policy would encourage the use of affordable preventative health care and keep workers healthy so that they do not develop conditions that are expensive to treat. Paid family leave will help intergenerational households by allowing adult children to take time off to care for their parents. The public health benefits of paid family leave will also be particularly beneficial for older adults, as they are most affected by illness.

Each year, NHCOA travels the country to listen to the needs and perspectives of Hispanic older adults. The people we meet are grateful for their jobs and the opportunities for success that those jobs provide. As intergenerational households become more common, the conflicts between the need to go to work and the need to stay home to care for a loved one increase. Last year, NHCOA met a worker whose father has Alzheimer's. After hearing about our efforts to promote paid family leave, the worker stated that such a policy would allow him to take time off from work to focus on giving his father the care he needed. I also met a 59-year old agricultural worker from Texas. She had multiple chronic conditions like diabetes, but could not afford to take the several weeks she needed at various times to manage those conditions. Paid family leave would have given her a better chance to prevent the worsening conditions she has today. There are thousands of people just like her in DC. The Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015 should come to a vote and be passed for them.

Thank you.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

February 11, 2016

Submitted to the Committee of the Whole

Testimony of Roger Horowitz, Pleasant Pops

Councilmembers,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today in support of paid family leave. My name is Roger Horowitz and I own Pleasant Pops. We're a DC small business that started in 2010 with me and my college roommate selling homemade ice pops at DC farmers' markets. In the five years since, we have expanded into a food truck and now own two cafes, one in Adams Morgan and one just blocks from here at 15th and H St. NW. I also am a homeowner in Pleasant Plains in Ward 1.

As a responsible employer, I'd love to be able to offer paid leave to my employees and I would love to be able to take advantage of paid leave. At Pleasant Pops, we offer a living wage and paid sick leave. We provide healthcare even though we aren't required to do so, and we grow our entry-level employees into senior managers. And these choices have paid off. Our business is successful because we invest in our employees. But there is one piece missing: we can't provide paid leave, because we don't have the cash on hand to cover 16 weeks of leave, or even to cover fewer.

And Paid Leave isn't just important to me as a business owner— it's also personal. I'll become a first-time father this summer and my wife and I will immediately take a financial hit. She's a federal employee with no paid leave offered for new moms and I'll have to keep working. If I took the time off that I want to in order to support my wife and new child, Pleasant Pops would have to hire someone to cover parts of my duties. But the business cannot afford to do that. And, under the new draft bill, she will still have no access to paid leave. Please include federal workers in this program. If they want to opt out, they can.

It's time that the District invest in your community, invest in your small businesses, and pass paid family leave for DC. We're behind you 100% and will continue to fight for this benefit as small business owners, DC residents, and as future parents. We want to be able to do the responsible thing as employers—and we need DC City Council to do its part and make Paid Family Leave an affordable reality.

Roger Horowitz
Owner
Pleasant Pops

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
Travis Ballie, Ward 7 Resident
February 11, 2016

I would like to thank the Council for offering me the opportunity to testify in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act. My name is Travis Ballie and I am a proud Ward 7 resident. I am here speaking for myself today, but I also work for NARAL Pro-Choice America, a reproductive freedom advocacy organization that is proud to be a supporter of this bill. I testify in support of this bill because of all the working parents, like my own mother, who could not be here today, but who would benefit the most from this bill.

My mother's only real day off during her pregnancy with me was the day she gave birth to me. Being born two months premature, I was placed in the neonatal intensive care unit, where they were not sure if I would make it. My mother was forced to go back to work just two days after birth because she had no access to paid parental leave. Can you imagine having to leave your newborn in the NICU? Sure, she could have taken off unpaid leave, but then how would you advise on what bills to delay paying during that time? The food I would need soon at home? The medicine I would need? How about the heat to keep us all warm? I survived a difficult first few months on Earth, but the next few years would require frequent hospital visits. These visits ultimately became too hard for my mom, and I was sent off to live with other relatives. A city without paid family leave is city where families like mine will continue to be torn apart.

I believe 16 weeks of paid family leave is the bare minimum for what families need. In a city where the cost of living often rises faster than incomes, DC also needs a robust progressive wage replacement rate. 90% is already the bare minimum of affordability, please don't lower it. We also need to continue our proud history of civil rights, by adopting broad definitions of families in the final piece of legislation. The definitions currently in the bill do a disservice to the many caretakers in our community. I hope I can count on this Council to pass a good bill.

Testimony of Daniel A. Turner
Founder and CEO of TCG
Supporting the Universal Paid Leave Act
Committee of the Whole, February 11, 2016

Thank you, members of the Council, for the chance to weigh in on this important legislative opportunity, and to voice my support for the Universal Paid Leave Act.

My name is Dan Turner. I'm the founder and CEO of TCG, a 22-year-old company. TCG is a government contractor with, as of this week, 104 employees. I founded TCG in Ward 3, where I was born and raised, and our current headquarters is in Truxton Circle in Ward 5. We are moving our offices this year to Petworth in Ward 4. And I live in Crestwood, in Ward 4.

Using the revised draft legislation issued earlier this week, only employees working in DC are covered, so TCG would have paid \$50,213.58, an almost trivial sum for a \$20m company. Even if all my employees in every state were covered, TCG's cost last year would have been \$87,275.17, less than TCG's median salary for one employee.

TCG currently offers 3 weeks' paid leave for new parents, to be taken as part of the 16 weeks of DCFMLA. We don't currently offer paid leave for other family leave reasons. If this legislation does not pass, competitive pressures in my industry may force me to do so anyway. The potential liability to TCG may be substantially higher than \$87,000.

We have occasionally had employees take a few months off — I myself took off six months in 2012 after the birth of my twins, preemies, who spent their first 5 months at the NICU at Georgetown. It's never pleasant, and since employees are assigned to a particular contract, it's tough to get our clients to keep the position open. But giving leave is often what is needed to keep the employee from quitting. Personal crises can destroy an employee's productivity and distract the whole team; giving employees time off to deal with their family or personal situations is just good sense.

In my view, this legislation is a worthy and important change to our society's employee safety net. It's not cheap. But is it worth the cost for my company? I think it is. New TCG employees currently have a year until they qualify for paid parental leave; if this legislation passes, they will qualify immediately. This will make it easier for employees to come work for me even when they're about to have a baby. I'm in favor of anything that makes it easier to hire great people.

This will also help me recruit by drawing people to live in DC - a market with, effectively, 0% unemployment among the highly skilled labor pool from which I draw. And, realistically, the 1% cost will eventually come from employee salaries or slightly reduced raises, so in the long run it will pay for itself in a way that's nearly painless. I think the fears of businesses are overblown, and the benefits are myriad. I know the Chamber of Commerce disagrees with me. I've talked to

my friends there. I think they're focusing on the cost instead of the benefits. They obviously don't speak for me.

The reality, however, is that none of us knows what will actually happen when this law is in effect. Fortunately, laws aren't written in stone. If things do not go as planned, the Council can make adjustments. As a CEO, I am regularly tempted by analysis paralysis. But I've found that fear of the unknown is not an excuse for a failure to act.

Thanks to the Council for this opportunity to speak for myself. I can take questions if you have any.

Testimony of Chanda Davis in Favor of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
Before the Committee of the Whole
February 11, 2016

My name is Chanda Davis and I am a D.C. resident of Ward 7. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

Since October 2014 I have worked 30 hours per week as a deli clerk at Giant. In November 2015, I gave birth to my little girl, Meliana, and was out for 7 weeks on unpaid leave recovering from childbirth and caring for my newborn.

Being out on unpaid leave made it very difficult to care for my family of four children, as I am the exclusive breadwinner. I am fortunate to be paying reduced rent; however, even with that program I fell two months behind on paying my landlord as well as other bills, including having my phone cut off.

I tried to save up before I knew I was going to be on leave, but by the end of the first week of leave I was out of diapers and wipes and I couldn't afford to buy more. It's difficult to save enough when living on very low wages.

In the first month I also had trouble buying food for my family. It took lots of hot dogs and french fries from the Dollar Tree, but I managed.

Even when my SNAP/TANF benefits were adjusted, I still couldn't pay the rent or buy anything else we needed. I was only able to provide my family with Thanksgiving dinner and presents on Christmas with the assistance of others.

I wish I could have taken off work for a whole four months, but I couldn't afford it. I breastfed Meliana the entire time I was on leave, and wanted to keep doing it, but I went back to work at the beginning of January and had to give it up because it is too hard to pump during work hours.

I have never had paid leave. When I had my first child I was working at Burger King, but I quit right before I had the baby because I wasn't going to make it with no leave, and I thought they would fire me anyway. That's why I urge you to make sure job protection stays in the bill. Working part time in retail is unstable work, and we almost never qualify for the job protection we need to feel safe in taking leave without being tossed out the door.

Because I have no paid leave, I have had to choose between taking care of my family physically and taking care of them financially - that's not a fair choice. Please pass the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015 to support mothers like me who are already working very hard to care for their families.

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
THE UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015
Testimony of Kristin Garrity Sekerci**

Good evening. My name is Kristin Garrity Sekerci and I am a Ward 1 resident living in the Columbia Heights neighborhood. I am here to support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

I first came to D.C. in 2007 as a student at American University and I met the man who would become my husband. As I continued my education at AU, my husband worked hard to open Angelico La Pizzeria, a small pizzeria on Mt. Pleasant Street. I'm so proud to say that it is now a thriving small business in the community. Councilmember Nadeau, we'd love to see you stop by sometime! I love living in D.C. and it's why I'm so committed to this legislation.

Paid Family and Medical Leave is an issue that hits close to home. When my son was born earlier this year, I was working at a small non-profit in D.C. where I did not have access to paid or unpaid maternity leave. My boss was flexible and willing to hold my position, but to go weeks or months without pay, and then to afford child care immediately on returning to work, just wasn't possible. I was left with the tough call to quit my job and stay home with my son for the foreseeable future. Staying home, though, has not been without its financial burdens for my family, and now I've returned to work. I can't help but wonder whether I would've returned to work much sooner, which would have been better for my family and my career, if I had had access to that initial safety net of up to 12 or, preferably, 16 weeks paid leave.

This isn't just a financial issue; it impacts the health and well-being of new babies. Within the first 16 weeks after birth there are a total of eight routine appointments for postnatal care—seven for the baby and one for the mother. I would have missed so much work if I was employed at that time. For families that can't afford to lose even a day of pay, those appointments and their life-saving vaccinations and critical preventative care just don't happen. This is also important because in the Discussion Print of the bill, new moms would have had to spend down their sick days and therefore have no time for these and other routine appointments, particularly for moms needing to go back to work early.

I submit this testimony not only as mother, but as a daughter who will eventually need to care for her parents. I am disheartened that the latest version of the bill would not include coverage for me providing this kind of care.

This is an elderly issue, a sick person issue, an injured person issue, an adoption issue. Please help D.C. residents and employees avoid having to make the difficult choices between recovering after birth and bonding with their newborn versus earning a paycheck, or between caring for an aging or sick loved one versus having to institutionalize them, or between working through your latest round of chemo versus staying home to heal. These are unfair and frankly cruel choices. These choices keep residents and employees from thriving, and for some, surviving. They keep us from fully contributing to the D.C. economy and workforce. And in an expensive city, they keep us from staying. Thank you.

Testimony by Howard F. White
In support of Paid Family Leave
February 11, 2016

My name is Howard White. I am here to share my support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. With the exception of two years of Army service, I have lived in DC since 1959. My wife and I have owned a home in Shepherd Park in Ward 4 since 1969.

I am a retired Federal employee. I worked as a gerontologist. From both a personal and a professional perspective, I find the removal of parental care in the revised bill problematic. Caring for parents is a core belief in traditional Judaism, which states that even if an aging parent throws your purse into the sea, you still must respectfully care for him or her. Having children around to serve as advocates often results in improved care. Especially during end-of-life situations, both the child and the parent gain immeasurably from being together. I regret that I could not spend more time with my mother when she was dying.

My second area of concern is mental health. At one point, one of my children had temporary, but very serious, mental health problems. My being able to spend time with him was an important factor in healing. Today he is a successful and well-balanced adult. All parents should have the ability to be available to help in such situations.

As a professional, I worked on Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) issues. I found that many ADA advocates did their best to ignore mental disability issues in public relations and technical assistance activities. Mental illness is a serious health problem and we should not push it aside as a secondary issue.

I hope you will reconsider these changes in the bill.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
Submitted to the Committee of the Whole by Zeke Reich

My name is Zeke Reich and I'm here to support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. I live with my wife and two small children in Ward 4, I am a social worker at Mary's Center in our Community Mental Health Program in Ward 4, and the majority of my clients live in Ward 4. And I have seen how important a paid leave policy is to the fabric of families. I think of a mother so busy with juggling work and a newborn that she couldn't notice her teenage son slipping into a suicidal depression that ended in hospitalization. I think of an immigrant client whose wife had a concussion a year ago but who still has not been able to take enough time off work to get her tested for lasting neurological damage. My clients are already pummeled by the housing crisis and the absence of quality jobs. When family emergencies or new babies come, there is not a lot of room to give.

I also think of my own experience as a father of two. When my daughter Myla was born three years ago, I was lucky enough to be in school and have an entire summer to spend as primary caregiver. At the start of those 10 weeks, I was a well-meaning but passive dad who often stepped back to let Mom do the real work of infant care. By the end of that time, I had stepped up, and my relationship to my daughter has never been the same. I can only wish for others, especially other men, the freedom to experience this kind of shift into true co-parenting. But I know that it is a joy--not to mention a step towards real gender equality--that is blocked for too many people by social norms and the need to maintain a paycheck. Indeed, by the time my son Matan was born, one year ago, I had returned to work. And that summer I would have done anything to be with him the way that I had been with his sister. But I had only been at the job for ten months, so FMLA was not an option--and if I had just taken time off from work, I could have lost my job. So every morning I said goodbye and walked out the door, knowing full well just what I was missing.

A well-thought-out paid family and medical leave program would be both a major support to families in crisis and a game-changer for male involvement at home. Of course such a program would have to provide job protection so that it could be utilized without fear of repercussion. It would also have to be administered with sensitivity towards vital organizations like Mary's Center, which would be using its already-thin resources to cover positions with temporary workers. I urge the Council to include language that both protects jobs and mitigates the burden on agencies--for example, by adjusting the District's allotments and contracts with non-profits to reflect the costs of a new leave program. And I urge the Council--on behalf of my Ward 4 clients and my own Ward 4 family--to advance this legislation in the strongest and most supportive form possible.

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**PUBLIC HEARING ON
B21-0415:
UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015**

FEBRUARY 11, 2016

Testimony of Amanda Steinberg

Hello, and thanks to the council for allowing me to testify today in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. My name is Amanda Steinberg. I am 31 years old and live in Elkridge, Maryland, with my husband John. We both have advanced degrees, we own our home, and we contribute a great deal to our local community and economy. John is a federal employee in Maryland, and I started a wonderful job as a librarian at a university here in DC in the fall.

We don't have children yet, but now that we are both working, we are thinking about starting a family. Before we do, we have some decisions to make, mostly because my daily commute is 1.5 hours each way. At the moment, we are considering two options: to keep my job, which I love, and move closer to DC, or to leave my job once we have children, since it is too expensive and difficult to maintain the commute. Until recently, we were leaning toward the latter option. It seemed more practical. It's more expensive to live closer to or in the city, and we worried that the environment might not be the best for children. Also, we don't know many people who live in DC, and want to raise our children in a supportive community. But when we heard that you were considering this law, our perspective changed.

It wasn't just the personal benefit of getting sixteen weeks to spend bonding with our future child that attracted us about this law, but that a community where parents have time to invest in their children is a community consistent with our values and a place we would fight for and be loyal to in the long term. It's a community where, as research has shown, fathers would spend more time with their children throughout their lives. Where women don't feel they have to make a choice between a career and a family, and so are happier in both of these roles.

This is why I was disappointed to see that the maximum leave has been shortened to twelve weeks. Months three and four are when babies start to see the world and really get to know their parents. Even more upsetting, though, is that the bill no longer includes reverse commuters or federal workers. If we move to DC, my husband would be both: a reverse-commuting federal employee. Please don't cut out a large portion of DC residents. We want to pay into the program for him.

I can't speak for everyone in my generation, but I can tell you that my friends, family and I talk a great deal about how much happier young families would be in their jobs and their communities if they were able to spend more time with their young infants before returning to work. A friend of mine in Massachusetts teared up when I told her about the Universal Paid Leave Act, thinking about how life-changing it would have been to have her husband home to help with their new baby for longer than just a week.

Being known as the most family-friendly city in the country would do a great deal to attract young couples and families like my husband and I to come to the city and stay in the city long-term. You will see that if you allow us to invest in ourselves and our families, that investment will pay large dividends in the work and commitment young families devote to Washington, DC. Thank you again for taking the time to hear my story.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

February 11, 2016

Submitted to the Committee of the Whole

Testimony of Jessica Lott

My name is Jessica Lott and I'm here to support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. I live and work in Washington DC in Ward 6. In July my husband and I were excited to welcome our first child – a healthy baby girl. Being able to focus all of our energy on our daughter during her first weeks was crucial to our success as parents and to her long-term well-being.

Unfortunately, my husband's work outside of Washington DC does not provide any paid parental leave. So, he took sick time while we were in the hospital and, when we returned home, he relied on the vacation days he had been stockpiling. But, after 3 weeks, he had to get back into the office. My husband is a reverse commuter. Please cover him too! Instead of just cutting reverse commuters out of the program, please give our families the **choice** to opt out. We understand there is a cost to the program, and we are happy to pay it.

My employer just expanded its paid leave policy from 10 to 20 days. Knowing this would not be enough, I had spent years saving sick days and conserving vacation days. This was the only way to extend our time, despite the fact that parenting is neither a vacation, nor is it an illness. We could not imagine both being back at work when our baby was 4 weeks old. We were still figuring out breastfeeding. She had to be held all the time. When she was two weeks old, I got an infection and couldn't get out of bed for three days. We had a number of doctor's visits for the baby and for me, since it takes several weeks to heal from the marathon that is labor and childbirth.

I have now returned to work and our daughter is in daycare. If we want to take any more time at home with her in the months ahead – or if one of us gets sick – my husband and I will inevitably have to take unpaid leave. New parents who have just taken maternity or paternity leave still need access to regular sick days when they go back to work for the 100% chance that their baby will get sick in that first year. If parents have to risk their income to stay home with a sick baby, they're not getting the financial stability we're trying to create. If they bring their sick kid into daycare because they can't afford an unpaid day off, it puts all of the children and educators at risk. I hope you will explore alternative options for how to manage the waiting period of the bill.

In these first few months it has felt as if we've been walking a tightrope -- one unexpected change and everything might come tumbling down. To be sure, our family is fortunate in many ways to have cobbled together a safety net. But we know that not everyone in this city is lucky enough to have that kind of support.

No one should be forced to rely on the generosity of relatives and friends to ensure the safety and success of their child's earliest days and months. No one should have to spend down their life savings or hope that their boss will be understanding to make sure their child gets the attention and care they need to thrive.

Finally, it makes DC a much more appealing place to raise our family. Since our daughter has arrived we have been considering moving back to the Midwest to be closer to family who might be able to help. But if enacted, hopefully with 16 weeks of leave, again, and a progressive wage replacement rate, this policy would change our calculus, making us much more inclined to stay and invest here in what would be the most family-friendly city in America.

Testimony in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

February 11, 2016

Testimony of Lindsay Dupertuis

My name is Lindsay Dupertuis and I am 28 years old. I'm here because I support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. I've been a DC resident for almost six years, currently living in the Lamond-Riggs neighborhood in Ward 5. I love living in the District and I try to be an active member of the community. I'm a registered DC voter and I volunteer as a literacy tutor in Columbia Heights. I hope to live here for years to come.

I have a lot of hopes and dreams for the future. Unfortunately, life doesn't always go how you plan it.

I know this from experience. Despite my youth and my healthy lifestyle, I've been diagnosed with two autoimmune diseases since I turned 22. These are chronic illnesses without a cure, and they affect my well-being every day. Sometimes it is difficult to function, but I don't want to give up on my life. I want to advance my career and live my life to the fullest as long as my health allows.

Sadly, I won't be able to support myself forever. Because of my condition, I will need a liver transplant at some point during the next 15 years. I dread that moment—not just because it will be painful and risky for me, but because I will need to rely on the kindness of my spouse, siblings, and parents to care for me during that time. I will need a lot of love and attention both in and out of the hospital. And a liver transplant can result in around \$500,000 in billed charges.

Every single day, I worry that I will financially ruin my family because of my health problems.

However, with paid medical and family leave, I hope that we can make it through the next few years intact. Paid medical leave would allow me to take time off of work without losing my income. Mr. Chairman, while 12 weeks is a great start, when I have a major surgery like this, 16 weeks, or longer, is what I will need to fully recover. This could give me enough time to get back on my feet. It would also allow my spouse to accompany me through the most daunting part of my operation and recovery, without worrying about losing precious income. He won't have to decide between caring for me and putting food on the table. That gives me a lot of hope.

At some point in our lives, everyone finds themselves in such a position. We have to care for our loved ones, or ask for their care. Paid family leave is a compassionate, practical, and *realistic* solution to problems that we all face. It helps families function better, and it helps communities function better. Please keep my hope alive and pass this legislation. Thank you.

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015
Testimony in Support of Paid Family Leave
From Sabrina Sussman, Resident of Ward 6
February 11, 2016

Members of the Council, thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak with you this evening. My name is Sabrina Sussman, and I have lived in Washington DC for nearly 11 years. I moved here as an undergraduate student, stayed when I became a federal employee and a graduate student, and am now a proud homeowner in Ward 6. I serve at a non-profit association focused on improving our nation's transportation system, and have worked closely with many of your colleagues to make our city a safer, more efficient, and accessible place for all.

In the eleven years I have been your constituent, I have had the unfortunate need to utilize provisions of personal and medical leave on three separate occasions. My story is not unique - but it is a critical reminder of why we must support people throughout their lives, because anything can happen - and usually does.

In August of 2012, my 57-year-old father was diagnosed with terminal, stage IV Colon Cancer. I went home to be with him and my mother for what I thought would be one week. Multiple complications later - I was on paid family caregiving leave for 10 weeks.

In May of 2014, I went for an early morning run in my neighborhood, and was the victim of a hit and run. To this day, the driver who nearly took my life has not been found. But I went on 13 weeks of medical leave, had two reconstructive surgeries, had have spent the past 20 months of my life in physical therapy.

In December of 2015, I took four weeks of paid family caregiving leave to be home while my mother had emergency surgery and my father was admitted to the hospital for oncological care.

The recent version of this bill would no longer allow me to support my parents. And it is unclear whether I would have been able to take paid medical leave to recover after treatment from my accident. I'm sure you didn't mean to exclude me, but the ambiguous language should be explored further.

Our city is more than its physical infrastructure. It is also a reflection of the lives that our citizens are able to create for themselves and their families. Personal and family medical leave is a critical right that we must guarantee to all our residents. It is a crucial tool to enable our city's people to live lives that are healthy, sustainable, equitable and something to be proud of. To make this a city we can all be proud of, we need to pass a strong Paid Family and Medical Leave bill for all of us.

My story is only mine. But it represents the stories of so many others, and is a critical reminder of why we must support people throughout their lives, not just at moments of joy. Family leave is often most needed in when we least expect it. And as protectors of the public good, I encourage you to ensure that it is there for everyone who lives or works in DC. Thank you.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

February 11, 2016

Submitted to the Committee of the Whole

Testimony of Elizabeth Kanter

Good evening Councilmembers. My name is Elizabeth Kanter, I am a resident and voter in Ward 1, and I support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

This summer my aging father fell down the stairs and broke his neck. I am an only child and my mother died 17 years ago, so I went up to New Jersey to manage his health care and prep his home with new safety measures. I was with my dad for about five weeks. I work from home and have the flexibility to work from almost anywhere. But managing all the details of my father's life meant that as ambitious as I was, I was only able to work a handful of days over five weeks. I am incredibly grateful that my boss is very kind and understanding, let me take time to care for my father, and was flexible enough to let me take things day by day.

I am a freelance contractor in the television business. Most contractors, or "permalancers," don't have health insurance, let alone paid sick days or vacation. I am lucky to have 10 vacation days and 5 sick days. But when my father had his accident, I had already used all my vacation days for the year. Most of the time I spent with my dad was unpaid leave. It was a big drain on my bank account and a balancing act in terms of finances. My father has ongoing health challenges, and since he has chosen to age in his own home, I will continue to go up to New Jersey to help him out. Caring for aging parents is now a reality of life for almost everyone. I trust you can revise the bill and go back to a commonsense definition of family that would allow me to care for my own father!

I am blessed to have a good job, a steady income, a great boss, and enough padding in my bank account that I could afford to take that unpaid time off. I don't have kids, but I do have a mortgage. I can only imagine how difficult life must be for the many people who aren't as fortunate as I am and who face even more challenges in offering loved ones much needed support.

We all need paid family leave, and we need a bill that works for everyone. That's why it is also critical that low income workers have at least the 90% wage replacement currently in the bill. I urge you to maintain the Universal Paid Leave Act's progressive wage replacement structure so that no one has to choose between paying their bills on time and caring for the ones they love the most. Thank you for your time.

Testimony in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

February 11, 2016

Testimony of Ruti Berner-Kadish

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of paid family leave.

My name is Ruti Berner-Kadish. I work in the District of Columbia for a national NGO with a small DC office.

On June 3rd this past summer, around 6 PM, I received a call from a colleague. She is also a friend so it wasn't extraordinary to receive a call after work hours. But this call was anything but ordinary. My colleague's husband had just suffered a series of seizures. He was in the ICU in an induced coma.

Over the next few weeks, as my colleague and her spouse struggled to deal with terrifying and mounting unknowns -- medical, financial, and more -- our supervisors encouraged all of us to offer any support necessary. When she was able to work, my colleague was given the flexibility to do so remotely, so she was able to maintain her income. In the office, we helped by picking up any slack. Now over six months into her spouse's illness my colleague remains deeply grateful for the organizational support and love she continues to receive. This story also illustrates that, while 12 weeks of leave is a good starting point, it is really not enough to care for a loved one with this kind of serious health episode.

And, yet, and yet, there's a nagging worry at the back of her mind and in the pit of her stomach: Is there a statute of limitations on this good will? Will she ultimately be called to task for not putting in the hours? Could she be let go?

As the weeks went by and it was determined that my colleague's spouse had a particularly virulent form of brain cancer, it became necessary to go beyond the unconditional declarations of support and to look at the actual organizational policies. She looked for existing workplace policies to ensure that her ability to take leave did not depend on winning the boss lottery.

My colleague was able to use her paid sick leave to care for her spouse, and continues to enjoy tremendous flexibility and support. What the situation threw into sharp relief was how absolutely necessary it is to mandate and institutionalize humane workplace practices. What would my colleague's life look like if she didn't have one or both of these? The situation is devastating enough as it is. While it is surely a basic human right to be able to care for our families and our own health, as a society we are ALL better for making sure everyone has the right to do so. Please support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

City Council

Good Afternoon

First I would like to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify before you and tell you my story. My name is Ke`sha Scrivner I am a single mother of 5 (26, 22, 20, 14 & 3) with 2 granddaughters (8 & 2) I was diagnosed with stage 4 Breast Cancer in May 2014 right before my daughter's 2nd birthday. I have been a resident of the District of Columbia for over 22 years and an employee of the District Government for over 18 years. I am testifying in support of the 16 week paid Family/Medical Leave, the passing of this bill it is very important to me in so many ways.

When I was diagnosed with Cancer Breast my Surgeon, Primary Doctor and Oncologist requested that I go out on disability which sound good but realistically how could I with market rent to pay, electric, gas, childcare, food and the rest of life essentials and other needs.

I have had to work throughout all the treatment that I have received, I worked the whole time during chemo until my body shut down on me, I worked every day during radiation and left during my lunch break caught the train to GW Hospital received radiation for an hour each day then caught the train back to work. I had a partial mastectomy in November of 2014 and only time I've had to heal were the two months I was off due to me not having leave and the struggle of trying to find co-workers that would donate me leave so I had to return before I was completely healed. I am still having problems with my healing process because I cannot take the time off and there's nowhere for me to turn to for assistance so I don't know how things are going to go month to month for me and my family. This is a very hard issue for me because my struggles are real from making sure I have enough food in my house monthly, to my rental office not caring if I'm able to pay the rent one month but not the next.

I'm scheduled for another surgery on February 15, 2016 and don't know what I'm going to do because I do not have anywhere the amount of leave that I need. I have had so many setbacks such as Lymphedema, Neuropathy, recurrent cellulitis, constant soreness & pain in surgical site.

My oldest are on their own but I've had to ask my 20 year old to move back home to assist with the 3 year old because once I get off of work I crash due to my body being so tired, weak and in pain.

So this bill will help me in so many ways, I didn't ask for cancer but it would also mean a lot if the government that I have dedicated myself to for over 18 years could show some kind of sympathy and support to the residents that reside in this city. I would be AWESOME for me to be able to be home and heal without worrying about how I'm going to pay my bills while I'm home recouping, I still have a long way to go and it will be another 3 ½ years before I am considered cancer free but life goes on and so will I. Attached is a screenshot of the leave that I currently have which is only 33 hours once they take the hours from the snow storm because I was out , my health and body just will not allow me to be out in that type of environment so I was home in pain instead of sitting at my desk in excruciating pain like I currently am now.

I Am Grateful, Encouraged, Blessed, Loved, Strong & Determined. Giving Him Praise He Woke Me Up This Morning So What Do I Have To Complain About

Thank You in Advance

Ke'sha Scrivner, I AM A SURVIVOR



Strength

Courage

Hope



View Absence Balances

Kesha Scribner

View current absence entitlement balances. Current balances do not reflect absence requests that have not been processed by payroll. For more details please contact your absence administrator.

Empl ID	Empl Rcd Nbr	Compensatory Time Off Plan	Date Under Report	Reported and Unprocessed	End Balance
1 00004591		AN	01/23/2016	32.000000	65.000
2 00004591		DC COMP PL	08/30/2009		0.250
3 00004591		SH	01/23/2016		
4 00004591		SI	01/23/2016		5.000
5 00004591		TO	01/23/2016		

Go To: [Request Absence](#)

[View Absence Request History](#)

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

February 11, 2016

Submitted to the Committee of the Whole

Testimony of Kory Goodwine

My name is Kory Goodwine and I work in DC in Ward 6 as a utilities worker. I am here on behalf of myself and the other hard working people who work in DC. Paid leave for employees in the district is a great idea. Workers who work full time should be afforded the opportunity to be paid due to unforeseen things that come about.

It's so important that someone can take care of a family member who has fallen ill, or as a father be able to witness the birth of their child and be able to bond with them. Personally for me it is not a question of money but rather a question of conscience. The decision that you are making is not one of financial consequences but rather a question of humanity. There are other benefits as well. Mainly it will greatly improve productivity and morale of employees and strongly improve the relationship between employer and employee.

I can't believe we're the only country other than Papua New Guinea that doesn't have some form of paid family leave. Washington DC has the opportunity to lead this country into a new age in workplace rights and hope that they will do so for the residents of Washington DC as well as the employees of companies in Washington. Please pass the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. I thank you for your time.

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015

February 11, 2016

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

Submitted to the Committee of the Whole

Testimony of Aaron Fanwick

Good evening.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. My name is Aaron Fanwick.

My wife and I met in DC. Next month we will be celebrating our one-year anniversary. We are happy to call the District our home, and hope to start our family here, but that decision depends to some extent on paid leave.

I am testifying right now because I am excited to become a father. I look forward to being an active and involved parent who shares equal caregiving responsibility with my wife.

Being a strong presence in our kids' lives is non-negotiable. And there is strong evidence that when a father takes time off to care for a newborn, his child benefits tremendously in the long term. When fathers are not involved, the mother's career can often suffer.

When I moved here, I was part of the District's millennial boom. *The Atlantic* called DC the top destination in the country for millennials and *Forbes* referred to it as "the coolest city in America." As young adults surged into the nation's capital over the last decade, we helped create the economic and development boom that DC has benefited from.

Last year, the *Washington Post* reported that the millennial surge has come to a halt. I can understand why.

Thinking about starting a family, my wife and I sat down and calculated our future family budget. It became abundantly clear that without 16 weeks of paid parental leave, we will have to move to Maryland or Virginia. We just can't make it work otherwise.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, the District is the most expensive place in the U.S. for childcare. With 16 weeks of paid leave for both my wife and me under the Universal Paid Leave Act, we could stagger our leave, saving us from paying \$16,000 in infant care costs. 12 weeks is a great start as a minimum amount of leave, but our family will need 16 weeks. I ask that, in the final version of the bill, there is an opportunity to take 16 weeks once the fund is proven solvent.

With the progressive pay scale in the current bill, we will stay in DC.

Without paid leave the costs of staying in DC are too high. We will move out of DC.

Thank you for your time.



**Testimony of Laura Brown regarding the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
Before the Committee of the Whole
February 11, 2016**

Good evening, my name is Laura Brown, Executive Director of First Shift Justice Project, a nonprofit that provides legal services to low-income pregnant women and working parents in the District. I am also a resident of Ward 6. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

The lack of access to paid family leave is a major issue for my low-income pregnant clients. Virtually none of them have paid leave to recover from childbirth or bond with their newborns.

On behalf of my clients, there are four points I feel compelled to contribute to this conversation today:

- 1) For paid leave insurance to be meaningful to low-income workers, increased job protection must come with it. Access to paid leave insurance through the proposed program does not include the same job protections as the D.C. Family Medical Leave Act, which requires an employer to essentially “hold” an employee’s job while s/he is out on leave. The original bill addressed this issue by lowering the eligibility requirements for job-protected leave under the D.C. FMLA, from one year of employment to six months, and from 1000 hours of employment to 500. The recently released “discussion draft” of the law eliminates this proposal. This provision is critical for low-income at-will workers

who are vulnerable to termination and afraid to exercise their rights, and it must be restored.

- 2) Adopt the same definition of family as in the D.C. FMLA. The “discussion draft” of the law includes a very narrow definition of family. The DC FMLA defines a family member as “any person related by blood, legal custody, or marriage; a foster child;” a person with whom the employee has resided for a year, and a person for whom the employee permanently assumes parental responsibility. This common sense definition reflects the reality of D.C.’s households and caregiving relationships.
- 3) Do not exclude mental conditions from the definition of “serious health condition.” It has taken mental health advocates decades to address the stigma and suspicion regarding mental health issues like post partum depression, which are often not visible but no less real or debilitating than physical illness. Eliminating these illnesses from the definition of serious health condition takes us back to these dark, uninformed times and is also inconsistent with the D.C. Family Medical Leave Act.
- 4) D.C. employees should not be required to use all of their paid sick days before accessing the paid leave insurance. The two laws have two different purposes. Employees need to use paid sick days for issues that the D.C. FMLA and paid leave insurance do not cover, such as their own temporary, minor illnesses, doctors’ appointments, to care for sick children, or to handle issues related to domestic violence.

Thank you for the care you are putting into crafting this bill.

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015

February 11, 2016

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

Submitted to the Committee of the Whole

Testimony of Morgan Leighton

Hello, good evening, and thank you so much for the opportunity to speak here today in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. My name is Dr. Morgan Leighton, and I am a pediatrician in training. I am here to share the story of one my my patients, a little girl we'll call Maria.

Maria is six years old, and she has spent more time in the hospital than anyone her age deserves to. Maybe she is a cancer survivor, maybe she was born prematurely and has chronic medical problems as a result, or maybe she has a rare genetic condition. Whatever the reason, she is back in the hospital now, and I am stopping in to see her as I do every morning. She is awake and scared, because the phlebotomist or lab technician is also in her room, and she knows what comes next. I help the nurse and phlebotomist as we try to reason with her, coax her, offer her a treat, remind her what a big girl she is. Ultimately, her blood sample is drawn. She is crying now, and keeps saying that she wants her mommy. After her blood is drawn, I sit with her, listen to her heart and lungs, and tell her it's going to be okay. Then I get up to move on, because I have other patients to see. "Don't go!" she says, "I'm only six years old and I shouldn't be left alone." I hope you can imagine what it feels like to have to leave her alone.

You may be asking yourself, where is Maria's family? Why isn't her mother, father, grandmother, aunt, or someone else present to hold her and comfort her? And that is exactly why I am here today, in support of this bill. Maria has been in the hospital for months. For her and others like her, this is a part of life, spending weeks and months at a time alone or surrounded by strangers in a hospital room. It isn't her fault. It isn't her family's fault. They visit in the evenings, or take turns coming to see her, and sometimes a whole happy group of them can be found in her room, cheering her up, bringing toys and flowers and balloons.

But every morning, Maria wakes up alone, or surrounded by healthcare staff, because her family cannot afford to take the time away from work.

Although I did have that conversation at 6:30 in the morning with a real little girl, and left her room with tears in my eyes, Maria is not just one child. She represents the many children in this city whose families do not have access to paid leave. And she's right: no six year old should

have to sit in the hospital alone for weeks on end. Parents shouldn't have to make the choice between caring for their kids in the hospital and earning the money that allows them to pay the bills. Having a paid leave program that makes sure lowest-paid workers make back a higher percentage of their wages while on leave is crucial. This policy needs to ensure 16 full weeks of paid leave, and job protection, so family members won't fear getting fired for sitting at a child's bedside.

Let's pass the strongest possible Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015, for Maria, and for every child in DC.

Thank you.

**PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY
COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**“UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015”
BILL 21-415**

*in reference to a revised and draft “discussion print” version
released by D.C. Council Chairman Phil Mendelson on February 8, 2016*

**MARK LEE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
D.C. NIGHTLIFE HOSPITALITY ASSOCIATION
(DCNHA)**

February 11, 2016

D.C. Nightlife Hospitality Association (DCNHA) is a 501(c)6 nonprofit trade association and business membership organization representing bar, restaurant, nightclub, and entertainment venues contributing to a vibrant community nightlife and dynamic nighttime economy in the nation’s capital!

Chairman Mendelson, Council Members, Council and Committee Staff:

My name is Mark Lee and I serve as Executive Director of the D.C. Nightlife Hospitality Association (DCNHA), a nonprofit trade association representing local bar, restaurant, nightclub, and entertainment venues of all types and sizes, located throughout the city, and contributing to a vibrant community nightlife and dynamic nighttime economy in the District.

Hospitality is the largest hometown private sector business category and a primary employer, leading job creator, major tax revenue contributor, key economic development generator, and source of nourishment for the social and cultural soul of our great – and growing – city.

We are relieved that the fiscal realities of creating a massive new entitlement program have finally begun to reduce the scope of Bill 21-415, the controversial “Universal Paid Leave Act.” The pared-down provisions, however, remain excessive and the funding scheme remains wrongheaded.

Following the public humiliation sponsors of this legislation suffered due to the embarrassing introduction of a poorly conceived and financially unsustainable proposal, it was reasonable to expect that further action would produce revenue estimates and cost projections. Yet still we see none.

We remain astonished by both this revised proposal and an irresponsible process.

Having demonstrated a startling inability to appropriately conduct this policy conversation or responsibly produce a proposal, it is now time for the Council to step aside and allow a mayoral task force to take a new look at this idea.

Only three states offer this benefit, and for far less lengthy periods of leave and at much lower wage replacement rates. None of them impose a tax on business but instead fund the program entirely through an employee payroll deduction.

This proposal is the most radical, most extravagant, and most expensive program of its type in the nation.

The plan also provides benefits to far more non-District residents than District residents, and D.C. residents working outside the city are not covered. Only by converting program funding from a payroll tax on D.C. employers to a payroll deduction for District employees can this be rectified.

Most astonishing is the failure to learn from the city's paid leave program for D.C. government employees. You heard testimony by city officials on January 14 indicating that both the usage rate and leave duration have far exceeded projections, resulting in extraordinary costs far higher than anticipated.

In our testimony on December 2, we emphasized the substantial burden and competitive disadvantage this program would inflict on local businesses.

The math for local bar, restaurant, and nightclub employers is withering.

A tax of 1% on wages for hospitality establishments spending up to 40% of revenue on labor costs with a razor-thin average industry profit margin of only 4% results in this program reducing profitability by an approximate and staggering 10% of the bottom line.

We estimate that a full 1% tax on wages, likely necessary to fund this gargantuan program with enormous administrative requirements, would cost community small business hospitality establishments more than \$10 Million per year.

A legislative body so far unable to comprehend the implications of this proposal should allow others more competent to take the lead in determining a workable program and designing a realistic plan.

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D.C. Nightlife Hospitality Association (DCNHA)
PO Box 73294, Washington, DC 20056-3294

Mark Lee, Executive Director
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202-320-4911

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
Submitted to the Committee of the Whole
February 11, 2016
Testimony of Mike Salamon

As a resident of Ward 4, I am here today to state my fervent belief that paid family leave is both necessary and good policy for Washington, DC.

About one year ago, I was privileged enough to have my first child, which has proven to be one of the most rewarding experiences of my life, but also the most challenging.

That was especially true in the first few months. My wife and I, like all parents, had to face the sometimes terrifying question of how to care and provide for a helpless human being, and do it on minimal sleep. Things that previously had been routine and easy, like paying bills and keeping the house clean, suddenly had to be rethought and fit into our new and drastically different schedules.

When my son was born, I was lucky to work for an organization that gave me two months of paid leave to help with his initial care. I cannot imagine how other new parents get by without that time. Being there for my son and my wife in those trying, exhausting early days of parenthood was invaluable and helped us get our footing as parents.

Trying to navigate the complicated road of parenthood without that time at home free from the stress of having to go into work every day is a daunting task that puts tremendous strain on families, and is something no family in our area should endure.

While some employees like me can request time off to care for their families or themselves in times of need, I know that many jobs only make that time available as unpaid leave. It's especially hard for me to imagine how people who work in low-income or minimum wage jobs could possibly rely on unpaid leave when they need to be home with their families. As one of the lucky ones, my heart hurts for those who are forced to make impossible choices between caring for the people they love and earning the money they need to provide for those loved ones. I want to thank you for keeping lower-income families in mind with this bill and ask that you not let the paycheck replacement rate fall below 90%. How can any family afford to live on 90% of a minimum wage salary in this very expensive city?

The paid leave I got from my employer should be available to everyone. This time off was a necessity for my family, not a luxury. I urge you to pass a strong bill to establish a paid family and medical leave program that really works for *everyone* in this city.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
February 11, 2016
Submitted to the Committee of the Whole
Testimony of Ahby Levine

My name is Abby Levine and I'm pleased to be here today to testify in support of paid family leave legislation in Washington, DC.

I'm a native Washingtonian, a proud graduate of Wilson HS, a current Ward 6 resident, and mom to 2 young kids; one - Zachary - is a student at Ludlow Taylor Elementary School.

I gave birth to two kids in the past four years and was fortunate to be able to take 14 weeks with each of them. That time was partially paid in both cases. Even with the time and some money, it was a difficult time in my life and my husband's life, especially with our first son.

One of the most stressful aspects of my maternity leave was trying to figure out how to access and pay for child care for Zachary once I went back to work. I was lucky to have the resources to pay for child care - but we still had anxiety about how we might need to cut back our spending in other ways. And my husband and I were worried about finding a nanny or getting a spot in a day care by the time I went back to work.

Figuring out how to find and hire a nanny - or which daycare is high quality and logistically feasible for your daily routine - is a huge undertaking and involves complicated decisions. Having paid leave gave our family the time we needed to figure out daycare arrangements for Zachary, with some financial security. In the first 6-8 weeks, new parents don't have time to make a phone call, much less figure out these important details. Living with a newborn is a day-to-day endeavor. Having 14, if not more, weeks of leave ensures you can get your family's lives together. I know the revised bill only gives people 12 weeks of paid leave. That wouldn't have been enough, even for my family. Even with the resources we had, it was difficult - and I know that it's that much harder for my neighbors without the same. I understand that you're worried about costs. If we absolutely *have* to start with 12 weeks, I urge you strongly to make sure that the number weeks will go up automatically once the city knows it has enough money to make it work.

I also want to say that a strong paid family leave policy would also give DC a competitive advantage as an appealing place to live and work. I live in a community of young families on Capitol Hill that are deciding whether to stay in DC or move to the suburbs. If this policy passes, I think it will help keep young families here.

It's easy to talk about the importance of family values. We, the parents and families of DC, are asking for the ability to value our families. Passing a strong bill will send a message to the people of DC and to the rest of the country, that our city truly cares about strong families succeeding together. Thank you.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

February 11, 2016

Submitted to the Committee of the Whole

Testimony of Mary Laura Calhoun

Thank you so much for having me here today to support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. My name is Mary Laura Calhoun, and I live in Ward 4. My experience with my first child made it clearer to me why everyone should have access to paid family leave.

I'm a teacher here in DC public schools. I was due to have Isabel, our daughter, at the end of last summer, right before the first day of school. Things were going great for the pregnancy until mid-June, just as the school year was ending. At a routine visit, my blood pressure was elevated and I spent some time in the labor and delivery hospital ward waiting for doctors to rule out preeclampsia. While I didn't have the condition, I would have needed to stop working right away were I not already starting summer break. The summer was filled series of doctor's appointments, ultrasounds, and unpredictable hospital stays.

Eventually, my condition became HELLP syndrome, a complication that threatens the life of both mother and baby. Isabel was delivered immediately via C-section. While she was thankfully well enough to stay out of the NICU, she was was small and too weak to nurse or even drink from a bottle. It was a full time job for me to pump milk for her and a full time job for my husband to feed her through a syringe. My husband took the one week of paid family leave offered by his employer and three weeks of vacation before he needed to return to work.

Meanwhile, I was recovering from major surgery, and truly needed 16 weeks to heal and get Isabel healthy and strong. It took her 12 weeks to be able to nurse independently; had I not been able to take that time, Izzy may not have ever been able to breastfeed. Now she is thriving and I am back at work as a special education teacher serving our city's children. I was able to take a full 16 weeks through a combination of DC government family leave and saved sick leave. I'm disappointed that the current draft of the bill gives government employees like me a lower benefit than private sector workers - as a taxpayer I think our public employees deserve equal rights on the job, and as a mom I know that I needed that full 16 weeks, not just 8. I urge you to include the people who teach your children and run your city in this bill, and I look forward to a time when all DC residents and employees, including city workers like me, are able to spend the necessary time with their sick family members and new babies like I did. Thank you.

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015

Jessica Champagne

February 11, 2016

Members of the Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to tell my story and express my support for paid leave. My name is Jessica Champagne, and I have lived in the district for ten years. My husband and I own a home in Petworth, in Ward 4.

Since moving to DC, I have been lucky to work at unionized workplaces that provide paid leave. This has already made a major difference to my family.

Five years ago, I had the opportunity to support my husband Max, who is transgender, through a surgery related to his gender transition. For several weeks, while he was confined to our bedroom, I was able to bring him all his meals, keep him well supplied with DVDs of *The Wire*, and fill his prescriptions at CVS. I was relatively new in my job at the time and was a bit nervous about explaining to my boss that I needed time off for my partner's transition-related surgery. Because I had a union contract stipulating my right to the leave, I had the confidence to present my leave plan, knowing that I had a right to take care of my partner, and I was not dependent on one person's level of respect or generosity.

Last June, I gave birth to our son, Benjamin, who has come to the Wilson Building with me to visit several of your offices. When he was an infant, Benjamin had trouble regaining his birth weight, so for some weeks I spent almost all of my days and my nights feeding him. This time, it was Max bringing the food and DVDs, while I was functioning as a perpetual milk machine. Unlike many parents in the district, Max and I were both able to take more than 16 weeks of paid leave. By the time Benjamin hit 16 weeks, we just barely had our lives in order enough to both **take** good care of him. Our story is an example of why we hope the council will consider adding triggers in the bill to move the benefit up to 16 weeks as the pool is funded.

Both as the partner of a trans person, and as a new mother, I am so grateful for what paid leave allowed me to do for my family. I believe that everyone, no matter what their family structure, should have the right to paid leave to care for their family members. Similarly, I believe that all new parents should have all the time that they need to learn how to parent, to take naps, and to **fall** in love with their babies. In 2011, for Max's surgery, I only needed three weeks of leave; last year, every week I was allowed made a huge difference. I believe everyone in the district should be able to take off as many weeks as they need, including at minimum the 12 weeks in the proposed bill.

I am very grateful to the sponsors of this bill, who have created the opportunity for DC to lead the nation on leave. Thank you all for your time.

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015

February 11, 2016

Submitted to the Committee of the Whole
Testimony of Sara Alcid, MomsRising
in favor of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

I would like to thank Chairman Mendelson and the rest of the DC Council for holding this hearing. My name is Sara Alcid and I'm here to support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. I'm a Ward 3 resident and Associate Campaign Director at MomsRising – an on-the-ground and online organization with over one million members nationwide and tens of thousands here in the DC-area. Over 500 MomsRising members who live and work in DC have taken action on DC paid leave and their signatures, messages, and stories were delivered to your offices in November.

When having a baby is a leading cause of poverty spells in the United States, it's obvious that working families desperately need paid family leave.

Jennifer, a MomsRising member from Ward 6, told us the following:

Neither my husband nor I had paid family leave. I had a postpartum hemorrhage after the first birth, which made time off imperative, but difficult for both of us.

I also needed time to get a good start breastfeeding and to pump and save a stash of milk for when I returned to work. As it was, I spent most of my time trying to find good and affordable child care. I was anemic, exhausted, and worried about money. I felt like the victim of a cruel joke.

Hard-working people in the District should be able to earn *at least* 12 weeks, but preferably 16 weeks, of paid family & medical leave so that caregiving is not this difficult. Paid leave benefits everyone, from businesses and local economies to new parents, entire families, and the elderly.

Five years ago, my mom – a lifelong nanny and domestic worker – had cancer for the third time. As a low-income family, neither of my parents had any kind of paid time off. This meant that my mom delayed seeking treatment by several months on two different occasions. When her cancer became terminal, likely as a result of those delays, my father, a carpenter, couldn't afford to take any time off of work to care for his wife of 32 years. I happened to be on summer break from

college when my mom's health deteriorated and she needed a full-time caretaker. This was a matter of "luck" in terms of timing and caregiving circumstances that other low-income families don't usually experience. My dad was at work when she passed away, even though her fingertips were blue by the time he left that morning and we knew it was only a matter of time.

I urge you to make sure the DC Universal Paid Leave Act maintains a strong wage replacement mechanism so that a DC paid leave program is meaningful for low-income families. I also ask you to ensure that the bill's definition of family and medical conditions covered are broadened to include non-legally defined relationships, end of life care, and mental health conditions.

Thank you.

Good afternoon, my name is Luc Brami a principal of Gelberg Signs. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to testify on this important subject.

Gelberg Signs has been located in the District since 1941, in fact we are celebrating our 75th anniversary this year. We employ upwards of 80 people all who spend 100% of their time in DC.

Gelberg signs is very involved with the DC community. We are members or actually serve on the board on organizations such as the Washington DC Economic Partnership, DC Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Chamber of commerce, The District of Columbia Building Industry Association, The Associated builders and contractors. My partner is actually the Board chairman of the Covenant House of Washington DC, we participate in many of the DOES hiring programs such as "Project Empowerment"

Gelberg Signs is a union shop (International Painters and allied trades) under a collective bargaining agreement. We provide excellent wages and benefits which include up to 4 weeks' vacation, 4 personal days off for any reason, 401K, full family health insurance, paid holidays, short term disability, etc.

I'm not saying all this to promote my company, but to show you that Gelberg Signs is ALL IN to help DC business, residents, and its employees.

By now you have heard many of the general and macro reasons why the family leave act is a bad bill for DC Business and its employees. I would like to take a minute to tell you how Gelberg Signs will be directly affected in a personal level if this bill goes through as presented.

Gelberg Signs has uniquely skilled employees which cannot be easily replaced. If we were to lose such an employee for 12 weeks at the wrong time, it could literally put us out of business. The cost of this legislation for us would be in excess of \$50,000. As I mentioned to you we are a union shop, with a very healthy benefit package that can't be adjusted until the contract has expired.

This benefit has never been requested in union negotiations. If this legislation passes the financial hardship we would endure would cause us to reduce benefits and or reduce staff. In a competitive environment this additional tax burden will make us less competitive.

Historically DC was not known as a place to do business, especially in the area of manufacturing. We have had much success with this perception in the last 10 years in turning this image around. With all the new proposed legislation we are reverting back to this unfriendly business environment. Let's not throw all this effort out to waste. We should slow down, consider all the unattended consequences to this legislation, and react accordingly.

American Academy
of Pediatrics



**Council of the District of Columbia
Committee of the Whole**

**Chairman Phil Mendelson
B21-415: Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015**

Thursday, February 11th, 2016

Testimony of

Cicely Fadel, MD Ph.D.

American Academy of Pediatrics, District of Columbia Chapter

Good Evening Chairman Mendelson and members of the DC Council. My name is Dr. Cicely Fadel. I am an MD/PhD trained board-certified pediatrician, a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and mother to an amazing one-year-old boy, Sami. I'm speaking in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015 on behalf of the DC Chapter of the AAP, which represents over 460 pediatricians in the District.

As a new mother and a pediatrician, this bill is of particular significance to me. When Sami was born, I used a combination of vacation and working from home to piece together paid leave. This time allowed me to recover physically and bond emotionally with Sami while establishing good child-care practices. The financial stability allowed me to continue paying rent while taking on new fiscal responsibilities, including food, clothing, hospital bills, car seats and cribs. While I consider myself among the "lucky ones," the best option for a new parent should not be the use of vacation time. With waking every 2-3 hours for feeding and soothing – it is far from a vacation and the time available is inadequate. These Band-Aid solutions are simply not enough.

When caring for patients and families in Wards 4, 7, & 8, I recommend the AAP evidence-based guidelines on establishing breastfeeding, attending appointments and receiving immunizations. When I became a new mother, I realized how impractical the advice we give parents is without proper support. The situation only becomes more difficult the poorer you are. Now imagine if your infant has a severe health condition. Without paid leave, it becomes practically impossible. As I pursue a career in newborn intensive care, I have routinely witnessed parents make the heart wrenching decision between being at their baby's bedside and returning to work so that they can afford the mounting hospital bills. This should not happen.

In my professional medical opinion, 16 weeks should be the minimum length of time to allow new parents to stay at home with their child. Around 3-4 months, children begin to laugh, reach for objects, and develop secure attachments with their parents. Research shows that increased parental involvement at this time helps improve brain development.

Paid family leave has clear demonstrated benefits to both the individual and society. The debate comes when considering how to pay for it. In reality this is money already being

spent in the form of increased utilization of public assistanceⁱ, decreased paternal involvementⁱⁱ, lower rates of breastfeedingⁱⁱⁱ and lower rates of immunization^{iv}. Redirecting this money towards the funding of paid leave would be an investment to safeguard the health and well being of the District's children. The current system is inadequate and I know that we can do better. This bill is better.

ⁱ MetLife Mature Market Institute. (2011, June). *The MetLife Study of Caregiving Costs to Working Caregivers: Double Jeopardy for Baby Boomers Caring for Their Parents*. Retrieved 1 December 2015 from <https://www.metlife.com/assets/cao/mmi/publications/studies/2011/Caregiving-Costs-to-Working-Caregivers.pdf>

ⁱⁱ State of California Employment Development Department. (2014, July). *Paid Family Leave: Ten Years of Assisting Californians in Need*. Retrieved 1 December 2015, from http://www.edd.ca.gov/Disability/pdf/Paid_Family_Leave_10_Year_Anniversary_Report.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Huang R, Yang M. Paid maternity leave and breastfeeding practice before and after California's implementation of the nation's first paid family leave program. *Econ Hum Biol.* 2015;16:45-59.

^{iv} Daku M, Raub A, Heymann J. Maternal leave policies and vaccination coverage: a global analysis. *Soc Sci Med.* 2012;74(2):120-4.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

February 11, 2016

Submitted to the Committee of the Whole

Testimony of Angelo Thompson

Good afternoon. My name is Angelo Thompson. I'm here to support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. I have lived in DC my whole life. I currently live in Ward 8 and work in Ward 6 at a non profit that provides meals throughout the DMV. I just got married and I have three kids. When my first son was born in 2013, I considered myself lucky. I could plan to take 2 weeks of paid vacation off around the time of my wife's due date, but I had to request it 2 weeks in advance. But as many people know, taking care of a newborn baby isn't "vacation."

My wife, like me, works full time, but in a public school as a guidance counselor. Between the two of us, students in the DMV depend on our work, and it's hard to take time off, especially unpaid. After our first son was born, my wife was able to take some time off, but, because it was unpaid, she had to go back after only 4 weeks. That's not even enough time to heal, much less bond with a baby. She couldn't depend on me to help her with childcare, since one of us needed to be bringing in a paycheck. She couldn't understand why I had to go back to work so soon—but I did it because I had to provide for my family. Nobody should have to choose between "providing for" and "caring for" their family as though they are two different things.

How is anyone supposed to get by and raise a healthy family like that? How? DC needs healthy families and that's why I support 16 weeks of Paid Family Leave and a program that makes paid leave accessible for everyone. But the rate of pay for low-wage workers has to stay at 90%. Otherwise, this program isn't a real option for people like me.

Thank you for your time.

Testimony In Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
February 11, 2016
Andrew Hunt as owner of AGH Strategies

Chairman Mendelson and members of the Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. I am a native Washingtonian, Ward 4 resident, and owner of AGH Strategies, a database consulting firm also in Ward 4. Besides myself, we have five employees—a small business, but one competing for customers and workers against large and small companies from around the world.

Being small, we don't benefit from the economies of scale that larger employers do. Short-term disability insurance is quite expensive for companies of our size, and it doesn't cover family leave. As a technology company, our employees skew younger, and family leave is a major consideration for employees in their late 20s and 30s. We grant 2½ to 5 weeks of paid family leave, but we know that it is insufficient—the result is that employees choose to use up their general sick and vacation time to make up the difference. I disagree with the change in the new version of the bill that requires people to use up their sick and vacation days before accessing leave from this program. As we've learned in my office, using these days to extend family leave means there is no time left for doctor's appointments and other needs that inevitably arise once they're back at work. (As a dad of a 7-month-old, I know this too well!)

Time off is inherently disruptive to a business, but the bigger disruption is having to pay employees while they're not generating revenue. A big Silicon Valley company can spread that cost over a wider employee base, but without a public plan, we can't. With a public plan, the employees get wage replacement from the central fund and I still have those wages in my pocket to use as needed to cover the work. I am confident that my small business can survive if someone goes out on leave--my customers choose my small business because of the relationships we develop and support we provide.

District-administered programs can help our small employers offer big-business employee benefits: we have used the DC Health Link employer exchange for two years, and it has allowed each employee to choose the appropriate plan for their respective needs. Similarly, by pooling all of DC's businesses and individuals, we'll have a system that helps small businesses compete for employees against the big out-of-state companies.

Finally, a plea to keep it simple: just include everybody. I don't want the administrative burden of determining who's in and out, calculating how much someone has paid in, or doing paperwork if they move. Along these lines, I am disappointed that the latest version of the bill excludes federal workers like my wife. We were planning for her to be part of the program too.

In sum, we would like to provide more leave for our employees, but it needs to be funded in a predictable, consistent way. The proposed bill will make us as a company, and businesses in the District as a whole, better, and more competitive, employers.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
February 11, 2016
Submitted to the Committee of the Whole
Testimony of Geoff Silverstein

Thank you all for the opportunity to share my insights on this important issue and testify in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

My name is Geoff Silverstein. I am a founding partner of Friendly Design Co, a brand and interactive design firm in Ward 2, where I also live. My business partner, who lives in Ward 1, launched the company with me three years ago—and today we have 5 full-time staff in the studio. I am excited to support Paid Family Leave as a business owner and community member, not just because it's a better program than is offered in private insurance markets, or because it's the “right” thing to do, but because it will help make DC a more competitive and thriving marketplace, and a healthier place to live.

Disruptions happen in our lives. As a business owner, I've come to learn that I can't prevent the unexpected, I can only have a strong plan for when it happens. It's why we provide our staff with great health insurance, as well as long and short term disability plans. But there just aren't plans in the market that cover the realities of life. My wife and I will start a family, an employee will need to care for their aging parents, and in these situations, even the best short term disability plan won't cover the time we need. If a staff member needed to take maternity leave right now, our plan covers a generous 13 weeks, but at only 60% of their total pay. They have to sacrifice a huge chunk of the salary they rely on, and we have no mechanism to provide paid paternity leave—or paid leave for any other reason at all— if the situation isn't considered a personal ‘disability’.

However, the Paid Family Leave bill before City Council would allow us to plan for a wider and more realistic set of circumstances. What's more, we now pay close to 1% of our total payroll for our short term disability policy. Paid Family Leave would cost less than \$20 more a month and it is worth every penny. If one employee needs to utilize the city's new program for just a month over the next three years, we would break even.

Working in the tech sector, I see how graphic designers and developers are in high demand and how we must compete with firms across the country for talent. In fact, last summer we lost a great Interactive Designer to a startup in San Francisco, where even the smallest of companies

benefit from California's paid leave program. If DC is truly going to be a top tech hub, we must also have the benefits and social services that top tech talent expects.

As a small business, my company can't compete with the benefits of a huge corporation, but with Paid Family Leave we can offer one more benefit that is increasingly important to our workforce. This is good for my business and good for the city.

As a small business owner, I am asking you to keep the bill strong. Keep it at 16 weeks. Keep it covering everyone and don't exempt small businesses. I am asking you to apply this bill to me. Councilmember Evans, I wish you were here tonight so I could make these requests to you directly.

Paid Family Leave will help me be the kind of boss I want to be - someone who can reassure employees we'll be there and they'll be treated with dignity and fairness. And I want to live in a city where every employee can feel that way too.

Thank you.

Testimony of Thi-Lai Simpson
In Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
February 11, 2016

Good evening. My name is Thi-Lai and I am a Ward 7 resident in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

In 2007, I gave birth to my son, and had 7 weeks to bond, breastfeed and organize child care before I went back to work full time as a sales assistant at a radio station in northwest DC with a very modest wage. Before he arrived, it seemed like I would have a potentially decent stretch of time between my delivery date of Valentine's Day and my return to work. Those weeks turned out to be a total blur. Before I knew it, I was back at work, pumping (in my car, by the way) a depleting supply of breast milk as my 2 month old was cared for by a lady who provided daycare in her home. This was my introduction to motherhood and child care and, at that time, how I thought it was supposed to work.

Here we are again, 8 years later. My partner and I just had Wren last month, and I'm feeling slighted that the only paid maternity leave option I have is being managed through my short term disability policy. Because, god forbid something else happens to me or my family, I need to save that time for something else. I can't believe paternity leave is not an option outside of disability leave. My company provides 8 weeks of paid leave, which is wonderful but not enough. My 8 weeks are up tomorrow.

Before I gave birth to her, I was briefed on my right to exercise my 16-week unpaid option under DC FMLA. Job security is nice, but I am really upset that my ability to spend time with my family is directly linked to my salary. If I didn't use my FMLA rights, I would be going back to work on Monday. As you can see, Wren is still so small. I have barely slept in the last 8 weeks, I'm breastfeeding, we have barely been out of the house yet. New parents are just getting the hang of it in the first 6 or 8 weeks. We're enjoying it, but it's scary. So please understand that my being here today is a big accomplishment for us and a statement about how important I believe paid leave is to my family and the District.

Going back to work so soon after my first child was born did a disservice to me, him, my employer—everyone. I fear it will be the same situation here. The proposed paid leave program is common sense. Forcing people back to work before they are ready—whether a new parent or someone with a personal illness—is penny wise and pound foolish. There may be bodies in the workplace, but they probably are not as productive as they could be. I know that was true for me.

Please do not be foolish with this bill.

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
February 11, 2016
PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015
Testimony of Earl Pass**

My name is Earl Pass. I'm here to support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. I currently live in Ward 8 and work in Ward 6 at a non profit that provides meals throughout the DMV.

I recently had surgery for a collapsed hernia. Even though I needed more time off to fully recover, I couldn't afford to stay out of work any longer. I missed two weeks and that was already a hardship. I am worried that by coming back early, I am risking getting hurt again and missing even more work - and then what do I do? If that happens, I don't know how I would pay my bills. It doesn't seem fair that I had to go back before I was really healed.

Five months ago, my son got shot on the Metro bus. You may have seen it on the news. I am a concerned parent and a good father, but I could not afford to take any time off work to help care from him. I basically went between work and the hospital, not sleeping, so I could be by his side. I was just so worn out I didn't know what to do, but I also couldn't afford to lose my pay. How is it OK for a father to choose between caring for his son and working to keep a roof over our heads?

People who work in kitchens don't make a lot of money, and I need every penny I earn. I am glad this law would pay 90% of my pay because I couldn't afford to take leave if it was any less.

I give my all to my job but then when something happens, it's like everyone turns their backs. It just doesn't make sense.

Please pass this bill, so no more fathers have to choose between caring for their children and their paycheck.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

February 11, 2016

Submitted to the Committee of the Whole

Testimony of Julie Yoder

First, I would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to share my story. My name is Julie Yoder and I live in Petworth, in Ward 4. I am the founder and owner of a small business called The English Teacher Collective, and I am also a co-founder of the nonprofit Girls Rock! DC. I have been self-employed since 2007, and I started and incorporated my business in 2009. In 2011 my business grew to become my sole source of income, and it still is today. I employ one to four contractors on both a full and part time basis. I am here today to urge the Council to pass a well-crafted Paid Family Leave bill. From my observation the benefits to small business owners themselves, rather than just their employees, have been left out of the conversation.

I have tried to provide protection for myself and my contractors through the current private disability insurance market and I am here to tell you that it does not work. I purchased Guardian's seemingly affordable disability insurance plan for myself and my full time contractor, as it was the only available option for a company our size. I felt good that I was able to provide that sense of security for myself and the person working for me, but it turned out to be nightmare when I actually needed it.

In Spring of 2014 I developed shingles and I was too ill to work for nearly two months. I lost about \$6,000 in income during my sick period. I didn't have enough salary to meet basic monthly expenses and I had to set up an income tax payment plan with the IRS as a result. I had already taken too much from my savings to make ends meet.

I later submitted a claim to the insurance company. It should have been a clear cut claim. Instead I unsuccessfully battled the insurance company for 9 months, producing this amount of evidence and paperwork for them, and in the end they denied the claim because I had seen a CVS minute clinic nurse after hours instead of my regular doctor and because I admitted to working the equivalent of about 3 days during my illness to keep the business going. I cancelled the policy and accepted that if I get sick again I would just have to give up the successful business I had built and try to get hired by an institution that provides benefits. The private for-profit insurance market doesn't work.

If a public family or illness leave program had been in place I would not have been forced to suffer in this way and take such a financial hit. I and all the other entrepreneurs in DC deserve a better trade-off for our contributions to the DC economy. No job provider should be forced to borrow money, beg relatives, or shut down her business in response to a normal life event.

I want to thank the Council again for their service and for considering my testimony. And if I can offer some pragmatic advice, please get your shingles vaccine if you haven't already.

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the integrity of the financial system and for the ability to detect and prevent fraud. The text notes that without reliable records, it would be difficult to track the flow of funds and identify any irregularities.

2. The second part of the document focuses on the role of internal controls in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of financial information. It describes how internal controls are designed to prevent errors and misstatements, and to ensure that all transactions are properly authorized and recorded. The text highlights that strong internal controls are a key component of an effective risk management strategy.

3. The third part of the document discusses the importance of transparency and accountability in financial reporting. It notes that providing clear and concise information to stakeholders is crucial for building trust and confidence in the organization. The text emphasizes that transparency is not only a moral obligation but also a practical necessity for the long-term success of the organization.

4. The fourth part of the document addresses the challenges of financial reporting in a complex and rapidly changing environment. It discusses the impact of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence and blockchain, on the way financial data is collected, processed, and reported. The text notes that while these technologies offer significant opportunities for improvement, they also present new challenges that must be carefully managed.

5. The fifth and final part of the document provides a summary of the key points discussed and offers some recommendations for how organizations can improve their financial reporting practices. It emphasizes that a commitment to high standards of accuracy, transparency, and accountability is essential for the success of any organization in the long run.

PUBLIC HEARING ON B-21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

Testimony of Marcia St. Hilaire-Finn

My name is Marcia St. Hilaire-Finn. I am a registered nurse and owner of Bright Start Childcare and Preschool. I live and employ 21 people in Ward 4. As an employer, child care provider, health professional, and District resident, I strongly support the Universal Paid Leave Act, and urge the committee to enact a strong bill.

Bright Start has cared for and taught children since 2002. I am in the care business. That applies to my employees too. Providing time to recover from illness or care for sick family members enables employees to do their jobs well, helps retain our best employees, and allows us to provide excellent care to the children.

Paid leave would be neither costly nor difficult. I provide a yearly cost of living raise, and would account for the cost of the employer contribution when determining the size of that increase. I polled my employees, and they all said they would give up a part of their raise to have the peace of mind that Universal Paid Leave offers.

To provide care for others, we must first be able to care for ourselves and our families. With the support of paid family leave, we can master our caring role.

Earlier this month, an employee needed two weeks away to care for her ailing father. She had to take this leave unpaid. As if facing the illness of a parent isn't stressful enough, she also had to face the stress that comes with the unexpected loss of two weeks wages.

As both a business owner in the childcare field and a registered nurse, I am well aware of the public health implications of paid family leave. If my workers have an ailing family member, they may endanger the health of the vulnerable children that we care for, because their focus is split between their job and their illness or that of their family member.

Finally, this law is beneficial to my bottom line. Having my trained, valued employees return to work—even after as many as 16 weeks away—and to do so when they can give their all, means that the level of care we provide remains high, we maintain staff cohesiveness, and I do not incur the costs of re-hiring and re-training someone new. This matters.

I urge the Committee to pass a strong paid family and medical leave bill.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF B21-0415 UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015
Submitted to the Committee of the Whole
by Shira A. Bergstein
February 11, 2016

Members of the Council –

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of Washington, DC's Universal Paid Leave Act.

My name is Shira Bergstein, and I'm a third-generation Washingtonian, an eight-year Ward 2 resident, a Federal employee, and a first time witness.

My father passed away 20 years ago when he rejected a lung transplant. In the six months between his diagnosis and death, my mom was his full time nurse, chauffeur, cook, maid, and assistant, while also caring for two young girls. Since that year, my mother had the unique privilege of serving as the primary caretaker for five more chronically ill family members—spending, in total, nearly one-third of her life as a primary caretaker for now-deceased parents and siblings.

I know that coordinating doctor appointments and complicated medicine regimes pale in comparison to the love and support my mom offered my dad, aunts, and grandparents during the most uncertain and vulnerable periods their lives. On one morning, my aunt, recently diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease, called my mom in tears because her fingers no longer cooperated enough to fasten her pants. So my mom called in sick, at great expense to herself, and attempted to restore my aunt's dignity and pride by getting her dressed and ready for the day. My mom took weeks of her own sick time to care for those around her—but that allowed her to hold the job that paid the bills, while another occupation, for which she was never paid, demanded all her time and energy.

From personal experience, I also know how important caretaking is. Last month, my mom underwent emergency back-related surgery. She wasn't able to walk—not even to get a glass of water to take her medicine—and required round-the-clock care. I went from the hospital to the office—where I was on the phone with the doctors—back to the hospital. Simply put, when my mom needs me the most, I shouldn't have to be forced to choose between working and taking care of her. Yet the new iteration of this bill excludes my mother from the list of family members I would be permitted to care for. It also appears to exclude the kind of end-of-life care she gave her sister and other family members and I one day will be called on to give her.

Any employer—especially the Federal government—would relish the organization, communication, and resourcefulness my mom and I have exhibited time and again as caretakers. How wonderfully human would it be if DC had paid leave, from which my mom and I, even for a short period, could be free to uphold an essential obligation of loving and caring for our loved ones at the end of their lives. As a Federal worker, I would be happy to pay to have this

insurance, and hope that a revised version of this bill will restore my participation in this program.

I encourage you to support a broad definition of family, a more inclusive definition of medical conditions, and the rights of federal workers within the Universal Paid Leave Act.

Thank you.



**Council of the District of Columbia
Committee of the Whole
Hearing on Bill 21 -415, the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
February 11, 2016**

**Testimony of Danielle Lewis
Partner, Springboard Partners**

Chairman Mendelson, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act (Bill 21 -415). I live in Cleveland Park in Ward 3, and I appear today on behalf of myself and my business partner, Ed Walz, a resident of Ward 2. We also thank Councilmember Grosso and the bill's cosponsors for their leadership on this important issue. Ed and I own Springboard Partners, a small firm that helps nonprofits and foundations use communication to do more good. As longtime District residents and the owners of a business based here, we enthusiastically support the Universal Paid Leave Act and urge its passage.

The Universal Paid Leave Act is good for small DC businesses like ours. Ed and I have worked in DC for a combined 30 years, but our current partnership is only a few months old. Like many startups, we find ourselves managing a range of challenges while growing our business. It's difficult to bear the full costs of paid family leave for an employee having a baby or facing a personal or family health crisis.

This was a big challenge that we talked about when starting our business. We are a small team of three people, and so we simply can't afford to provide paid leave for our employees on our own. We investigated short-term disability insurance, and found it to be both expensive and very limited in what it would cover. But we know it's essential to provide paid family leave benefits, because there is no greater asset to a consulting company than its people. Being unable to offer paid leave puts our small business at a real disadvantage, by comparison to larger nationwide or multinational employers, when it comes to recruiting and retaining the best talent.

So we decided to contribute a portion of our profits to a rainy day fund so that in a few years we can offer this benefit. In the meantime, we had to be frank with our team that we can only offer unpaid leave – and this is simply not the kind of company we want to be. That's why we were so excited when the Universal Paid Leave Act was introduced. It's a great solution for small businesses like ours.



We've run the numbers, and our costs to pay into the system will likely be under \$ 2,000 per year. Budgeting to pay this modest amount into the public program on a consistent basis will be much more manageable for us -- and it means that we don't have to risk the financial future of our business for the weeks or months a team member is leave.

Our story shows why paid leave is so important to the businesses, and especially the people who call the District home. Ed's two girls were born in the District. He treasures the time he was able to spend home with each during the first few months of their lives as an opportunity to establish a solid child-parent bond and build a strong foundation for his family. Had his then-employer not offered paid leave, this chance would have been lost. I hope to begin a family myself in the next few years. A funding pool like the one envisioned by this legislation would make it more manageable for me to grow my family while we continue to grow our business.

I want to take a moment to address the changes in the most recent version of the bill. We are disappointed to see a reduction in who is covered -- especially DC workers who live outside the city. This means that the benefits won't apply fairly to everyone who works for DC businesses. The change in the definition of family also concerns us. With aging parents whose recent health history has included Parkinson's disease and significant surgery, we're keenly aware that care for family extends well beyond children and spouses. We urge you to restore these provisions from the original bill so that all DC workers can be covered to meet the needs of their families.

Community leaders talk a lot about family values, but when it comes to making policy choices, too few actually value families. But the District is a national leader in advancing policy that invests in families, from near-universal health coverage for children to universal pre-K -- both of which enjoy the strong support of our community's businesses. The Universal Paid Leave Act is the logical next step. And frankly, it makes us proud to call the District home -- as residents and as business owners.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify. We urge you to support small DC businesses like ours, and pass the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
February 11, 2016
Submitted to the Committee of the Whole
Testimony of Naomi Shachter

Thank you. It's an honor to testify today in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. My name is Naomi Shachter and I live in Columbia Heights in Ward 1. I've loved living and working in DC since I moved in 2012 to be closer to my grandmother.

My grandmother is an amazing woman. She was an organizer and a teacher, and earned a Ph.D. while raising three children. I'm inspired by her every day in my work organizing volunteers to work with DC elementary students. But my grandmother doesn't know this, no matter how many times I've told her, because she has severe Alzheimer's. She cannot feed or bathe herself and cannot be left alone for more than an hour. We're lucky that my grandfather is her primary caregiver and they can stay in their home, but he is aging as well. The last time I visited them, he slipped in their backyard. He only suffered bumps and bruises, but I don't know what could happen next time.

I wait for the call that something, large or small, has happened to my grandfather and I need to care of my grandmother immediately and indefinitely.

Without a paid family leave program, I would not only have to step away from the work my grandmother inspires, but I also would be forced to go without pay to care for her. Even if this bill passed, under the new draft language, she would not count as a member of my family. Perhaps a grandparent seems like a more distant family member, but I am the person closest to her, physically and emotionally, and the best person to care for her at the end of her life. I strongly ask that this bill expands the definition of family to include grandparents, as well as parents, siblings, and adult children.

Twelve or sixteen weeks of personal and family medical leave are necessary so that I can support my grandmother, and so that all of us can care for our loved ones throughout their lives. We need the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. Thank you for taking the time to listen to me today.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

February 11, 2016

Submitted to the Committee of the Whole

Testimony of Doug Foote

Good evening, Councilmembers.

My name is Doug Foote. I am a resident of Ward 1, and a Jeremiah Fellow with Jews United for Justice. I'm here to support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

A little over 30 years ago, my mother went to a routine checkup with her doctor. She was six months pregnant with me. The doctor discovered she was losing amniotic fluid, and she was rushed to the hospital.

She remained there for nine weeks.

My mom had a good job with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. But there was no FMLA. The only reason she didn't lose her job is that the state was under a hiring freeze.

Restricted to a hospital bed, my mom exhausted her employer-provided sick days, personal days, and vacation days, and then went about eight weeks with no income whatsoever.

I eventually arrived, still six weeks premature and I spent an additional two weeks in the hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) before going home.

30 years later, we still have no paid family leave policy. Not nationally, not in Massachusetts, and not in D.C. where I've made my home.

I have no doubt that a version of my story is playing out at the nearest hospital to where we're sitting now. Many of those stories, unfortunately, will not have my family's happy ending. My family had health insurance. We had two professional incomes. We had, due only to luck and circumstance, job security. And we had a *relatively minor* pregnancy complication. With all these advantages, my family *needed*—by doctor's orders—ten weeks of intensive and expensive medical attention.

For those with more serious complications, sixteen weeks seems like a low bar. Not "generous." Not "a luxury." Medically and financially necessary when something unexpected happens during a pregnancy or a birth. My family was lucky—and luck is the only paid family leave policy on the books. That's not sufficient, and it has not been sufficient for a long, long time.

I urge you to pass a strong bill that allows *everyone* living or working in DC to take 16 weeks of leave, with job protection for as many people who work as possible, and the important progressive wage replacement rate so that everyone who needs this leave can actually afford to take it. Thank you.

Testimony for Paid Family Leave Hearing 2.11.16

Sharon Rose Goldtzvik

Founder + CEO

Uprise – communications consulting for good guys

Councilmembers, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Sharon Goldtzvik, I'm the founder and CEO of Uprise, a communications consulting practice for good guys. I want to talk about why DC's paid family and medical leave bill could be the best thing for my business since Quickbooks.

Six months ago, I called my husband, who was in Korea on a summer exchange with his Ph.D. research group, and told him that I was ready to leave my job -- and my benefits package -- to start my own practice. He's my biggest cheerleader, and I haven't regretted the decision for a second. I love the feeling of being my own boss, growing a business and contributing to DC's vibrancy.

Without a doubt the scariest thing about leaving my job was knowing that we'd have to put starting a family on hold for a few years, at least, until we could save enough money to cobble together some kind of maternity leave. When I started Uprise, I was shocked to discover that, while you can buy your own health insurance or even short-term disability insurance (it's very expensive, but it exists), there is no private market for family leave. At all. Learning that the District was going to create a program that would address this gap made me proud to live here. Please make sure you maintain the plan to cover self-employed people like me through an opt-in system.

This isn't an abstract problem for me. It's an immediate one. It's worrisome as I think about starting a family, and also as I consider my aging parents and in-laws. As you discuss this new draft bill, please revise the family definition so that I would be covered to care for my parents and my in-laws should the need arise.

My husband and I moved to Southwest D.C. five years ago and we love living in the district. But, we also know that there are other options for us. At this point in our lives, a strong paid family leave law in D.C. would make us significantly more likely to stay here and continue growing my business here. In fact, I think that this law would make D.C. the best place in the country for a woman to start a business.

Starting a business is about putting your creative vision into the world. It's about having an idea and bringing it to life. For me, part of that vision is a city where we can live full lives, with jobs and families and time to enjoy everything D.C. has to offer. When I decide it's time to hire in the next few months, I want to be sure that I'm creating good jobs with good wages and benefits

consistent with that vision. I can't imagine hiring someone and having to tell them that they wouldn't get a paycheck because of a sick family member or a new child. But without a citywide paid family and medical leave system that covers small businesses like mine, I'll have to spend months or even years building up a huge piggy bank to pay for that kind leave out of pocket.

Big companies know that providing generous family leave benefits helps them attract and keep top talent. How can I attract the talented people that will help grow my business if I can't afford to offer basic benefits like paid leave?

The paid family and medical leave bill will help me hire more staff sooner. In fact, not having it is holding me back. We all want businesses to create good jobs, the kind we'd like to work in. Shouldn't we make it easier for small businesses to make that a reality?

As a business owner, as a startup CEO, as a woman, and as someone who believes that we should just never have to choose between a paycheck and caring for ourselves or our families throughout our lives, I urge you to pass the strongest possible paid family and medical leave bill.

**Before the Council of the District of Columbia
Hearing on the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
Testimony of Robert Coomber, ANC 7D01, Ward 7 Resident**

Thursday, February 11, 2016

My name is Bob Coomber. I am ANC for 7D01, the Kingman Park neighborhood in NE, Washington DC. I am here to give my testimony in support of Paid Family Leave in the District.

When I started my current job as an attorney with the federal government, my wife, who is a professor at the University of Maryland, and I had one child. We were egalitarian in the way that we raised our son. I would drop off, and she would pick up. I would cook breakfast, she would cook dinner. When we got pregnant with our second son, we planned to continue our progressive, egalitarian setup. However, it quickly became apparent that my new boss was not as progressive in his views of parenting.

One day I had to leave work in the middle of the day because my son fell and needed stitches. I sent an email to my boss, picked my son up from daycare, got him stitched up, and was back at work within two hours. Several months later my son woke up sick and I had to take a half day off to care for him. I emailed my boss to ask for leave. He said it was ok, but that he was becoming concerned about my pattern of last minute leave usage. This was only the second time I had taken leave in over four months on the job.

So when my wife and I became pregnant with our second son, I did not want to take much time off. I knew there is no provision in law or regulation that permits the use of sick leave to care for a healthy newborn. I should know, I'm an employment attorney. So I rushed back to work after just two weeks. But it was a huge mistake. It put enormous pressure on our family. My wife ended up suffering from severe postpartum depression, and my absence made it more difficult for us to identify and deal with her illness.

Though we have had our challenges, my wife and I are extremely lucky. We are both well paid (especially since I was promoted and replaced my boss a few months ago); as of last Friday we now have four very healthy children; and we enjoy some leave entitlements at our jobs. However, even people like us struggle with the crushing challenges of parenthood.

I can only imagine how hard being a parent would be if we were not paid so well, or had no leave entitlement, which is the situation for many people who work in the District. I represent an SMD with many single parents, and I am in awe of what they are able to do on their own. We have a responsibility to do more to help those who are raising a family alone. Our failure to do so is not just cruel, it's short-sighted. Without a right to family leave, a single parent is forced to choose between staying home with a newborn and abandoning earned income, which pushes them to seek help from government programs anyway; or returning to work too early, which has extreme consequences to parents' and children's health.

I was disappointed to see that the new draft of the bill issued earlier this week affirmatively prohibits federal workers like me from being part of this program. I urge you to revise this and cover federal workers, with an option for them to opt out if they choose.

With the Universal Paid Leave Act, the Council has an opportunity to lead the country with common sense, family-friendly leave provisions that are enjoyed by nearly every other nation in the world. We were all children once, and every one of our parents needed help. We have a responsibility to assist those that are bringing up the next generation. The Act creates a low cost and reasonable way of doing just that, and I again urge you to support this Bill.

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015

Testimony of:

Sherice A. Muhammad,
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 7D, Chair
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On behalf of:

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 7D

Submitted to:

The Committee of the Whole
Chairman Mendelson

February 11, 2016

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015

Testimony in favor of the Bill

Sherice A. Muhammad

On behalf of:

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 7D

February 11, 2016

My name is Sherice A. Muhammad. I am a resident of the Deanwood section of Ward 7. I am a small business owner, a professional in the nonprofit sector, and Chair of the Advisory Neighborhood 7D Commission. My greatest joy is being a parent of a vivacious 7th grader at DC Preparatory Public Charter School. It is from this perspective that I offer testimony before you as you deliberate over the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015, which I support.

Having garnered the support of 80% of District residents, paid family leave is essential Paid Family Leave to *working families* who are willing to invest a portion of their earnings into this type of benefit. So where does Ward 7 fall in this landscape?

Ward 7 was disproportionately affected by the recession, along with our neighbors in Ward 8, and recovery has been very slow.

Nonetheless, in the midst of our challenges, health insurance coverage data has presented a glimmer of hope. Thanks to the District's investments in Medicaid expansion and the DC Health Exchange, access to health care has increased. 95% of District residents directly purchased their insurance or enrolled in Medicaid.

This indicates that, when government performs its inherent responsibility to meet the basic needs of communities, the investment pays off. I urge this committee to use this paradigm as a prototype for the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. In Ward 7, among single female head of households, and low-wage workers, as well as among the middle class professionals, lack of access to paid family and medical leave renders a looming vulnerability regardless of one's socioeconomic status. Should a child or a parent become ill, what does this mean for the sole provider? Even for a two-income family, without access to paid family and medical leave, it often means there is a complete collapse of the household, leading to homelessness and the myriad of issues that come with it.

With access to paid family and medical leave, as proposed in the Universal DC Paid Leave Act of 2015 using contributions of up to one percent of payroll from employers, people could maintain stable employment while caring for an ill child or parent. This

program will help me as a small business owner, because it is sure to boost morale in the workplace and incentivize the recruitment of stellar workers. Small businesses across the city will thrive and expand.

Where there is investment on the part of government partnering with vested constituents who are willing to do their part, it is a win-win. My constituents and I want to be vested partners in this program. We urge this committee to take the leadership position and show how effective this partnership can be. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity.

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

**PUBLIC HEARING ON
B21-0415:
UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015**

February 11, 2016

Testimony of Josephine Kalipeni

My name is Josephine Kalipeni. I am the Director of Policy and Partnerships for Caring Across Generations, a national campaign with offices in New York and in Washington DC.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015, legislation supported by over 80% of Washingtonians.

Paid leave is often thought of as an issue exclusively for new parents. Caring Across Generations supports paid leave for new parents but are on board for another reason.

Every 8 seconds, someone in our country turns 65. That's 22 people in the 3 minutes I have to talk to you. As we get older, we will all need some level of assistance, and many Americans rely heavily on family to provide this care. In fact, 65 million American adults are caregivers today. They care for aging, sick, or frail parents, spouses, and family members with disabilities. Seventy percent of them work a job on top of providing care.

The challenges of caregiving sometimes force people, most often women of color, to leave the workforce, losing out on needed income and earned retirement benefits. No one should have to decide between their paycheck and caring for a loved one.

Policies like the Universal Paid Leave Act mean that family caregivers can take the needed time off to care for loved ones without having to add the extra worry of how they will pay their own bills. This vital careforce needs us, and the DC Council, to care for them so they can continue to care for others.

That's why I'm concerned that the new draft language of this bill does not include aging parents under its definition of family. When we are young, we rely on our parents. As we get older, they rely on us. This bill must expand its definition of family to include parents.

This is about job and economic security. This is about being better parents to our kids and being better kids to our parents.

Caring Across Generations supports the bold, national example DC is setting forth. Caring Across Generations asks the Council to unanimously pass the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015 with the full benefits, eligibility, and inclusive definitions of family.

Thank you.

Testimony in support of B21-0415 Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

February 11, 2015

Tania Lown-Hecht

Good evening, my name is Tania Lown-Hecht. I am a resident of Ward 1 here to enthusiastically express my support for the Universal Paid Leave Act.

My husband and I have lived in DC for four and a half years, and we both work for small nonprofits who are able to offer very limited parental and family leave. As we discuss starting a family, we have focused our attention on how we would manage early infancy as well as the staggering cost of childcare in DC. The prospect of having paid leave would be transformative for our ability to manage (both psychologically and financially) the responsibility of having a child. That first year is so critical, and 12 weeks of leave is a great start – thank you – but it's really a minimum amount. Perhaps we can raise the benefit to 16 weeks of leave as the fund becomes more solvent, which gets us closer to the time off doctors recommend for new parents.

Having access to enough paid time off would put a dent in the high cost of the first year of childcare and make it possible for us to continue living in DC, rather than moving to a surrounding suburb with a lower cost of living or moving out of the region entirely to be closer to family.

In addition, I know that my workplace would enormously benefit from the passage of the Universal Leave Act. I work on a team where there is no one to fill in for me if I am ill or out of the office for a long stretch. If the city were to support universal paid leave, my organization would be able to hire an interim replacement for me during my parental leave without taking a hit to its budget, thus continuing our work without interruption, ensuring my job security, and making it easier for the DC-based organization to retain me.

I moved to DC because it is a vibrant city with wonderful young people, incredible job opportunities, and a nearly endless supply of cultural activities. I would love to be able to settle down in the district long term, but the high cost of living and of childcare will make it virtually impossible for us to stay in the city if we have children. The Universal Paid Leave Act would make the difference for us.

I'm proud to live in a city that is leading the charge on progressive family and medical leave, and I would be grateful for your support of a strong bill for all of us who work and live in DC.

Thank you for your time.



Council of the District of Columbia

Public Hearing

Committee of the Whole

Chairman Mendelson

Bill 21-415- Universal Paid Leave Act of 2016

Thursday, February 11th, 2016

Good evening Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee. My name is Russ Snyder. I am the President and CEO of Volunteers of America Chesapeake, Inc. VOAC is a faith based not for profit provider of services and supports to individuals with Intellectual Disabilities and Behavioral Health issues in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia. VOAC is a member of the DC Coalition of Disability Service Providers where I serve as the Vice President of the Coalition. The DC Provider Coalition currently represents 47 members, 70% who are for profit providers and 30% non-profit providers, supporting over 2,000 persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and employ over 4,500 staff, many of whom are residents of the District of Columbia. The Coalition members provide residential, day, employment, in-home and other waiver services and supports to some of the most vulnerable, medically fragile and high risk residents of the District for persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

I am here this evening to testify on behalf of the DC Coalition of Disability Service Providers about Bill 21-415 *the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2016*. We are pleased to have received earlier this week and learn through our cursory review of the discussion draft – that the bill has added some further clarity regarding items like the wage replacement and cumulative leave provisions and also narrowed the scope of the intent of the bill which is important for the Coalition members. We appreciate the work that has been done on this bill and the opportunity to share our constructive comments of this discussion draft.

The individuals that we serve require 24/7 direct support and health care which is very labor intensive requiring at least 70% of our expenses for the group homes we operate. Also, our industry is highly regulated by the Department of Disability Services (DDS), the Department of Health and currently under independent monitoring due to an over 30 year old lawsuit (*Evans vs. District of Columbia*). The regulatory oversight is quite costly as it demands our members to invest in intense training for our direct human care employees which is a requirement to providing any care to the individuals in our homes and facilities. Due to our high costs associated with the demanding human care services we provide and regulatory oversight we are required to comply with, our members have minimal profit margins or no margin at all.

Most of the service and operating costs we provide are reimbursed by both Medicaid, through the Department of Health Care Finance and local dollars paid for by the DDS.

We estimate that our providers receive Medicaid and local funding around approximately \$275 MM annually to support some of the most fragile and high risk residents in the District. In order to support an up to 1% employee payroll tax to fund the benefit that would result from this bill, the providers would need almost \$2MM more funded through a revised DC Medicaid rate structure set through DHCF and approved in a State Plan Amendment by CMS. The Coalition members have received great support from both Director Turnage and Director Nuss and their staff in the past to assure that any increased expense to the providers is adequately and appropriately funded through the DC Medicaid rate system or with local government funding. Without such funding, it would be detrimental to ensuring continuity of quality service delivery.

Also, most if not all our members offer benefits that allow employees access to income replacement programs and comply with statutes like ADA, FMLA, DC FMLA, ASSLA.. To that end, we would suggest that the language of the bill align with other statutes to avoid another potential layer of statutory requirements that may create confusion with employers or add administrative costs that may not be reimbursable under the current Medicaid rates that fund our services.

In the coming weeks and months, the Coalition members will more thoroughly study the full text and continue our own due diligence to estimate the fiscal impact of the proposed bill while engaging our partners in DDS and DHCF in the dialogue.

We thank you again for the opportunity to provide our comments on the discussion draft of the legislation and look forward sharing with you additional information in future working sessions or hearings.



February 11, 2016

**To: Hon. Phil Mendelson, President
and Members of District of Columbia City Council**

RE: Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015 B21-415

Dear Chairman Mendelson and Members of the Council,

While changes on the "Discussion Print" of B21-415 are an improvement, there is still no exception of any kind for small business. The members of WMDA that operate service stations, convenience stores and independent repair facilities in the District of Columbia are very small businesses.

This could be the "straw that breaks the camel's back". We still know very little about this. There is still no fiscal note to show if this will work at 1%, or will it be 4%? How were these conclusions reached?

This bill, as written, is very bad for small business, and we do not believe it is "fixable" unless there is an exemption made for said small businesses.

Thank You,

Kirk McCauley
Director of Member Relations & Government Affairs
WMDA Service Station & Automotive Repair Association
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The Washington DC, Maryland, Delaware Service Station and Automotive Repair Association, (WMDA) is a trade association representing the interests of independent business men and women who own and operated service stations, repair facilities, convenience stores, and other related businesses.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

February 11, 2016

Submitted to the Committee of the Whole

Testimony of Emily Goodstein

My name is Emily Goodstein and I live in Ward 2. I'm a self employed photographer and a lifelong Washingtonian. It is a honor to speak with you today to support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

Some of my work involves photographing birth. I am with women when they become moms, using my lens to document the challenging and heroic work of bringing babies into the world. I see what a fragile state new parents are in as they prepare to take their new humans home from the hospital. I can't help but notice how physically, emotionally, and financially taxing life with a newborn is. It saddens me to think that, in many cases, this sacred connection will be disrupted only a few short weeks after delivery due to a complete lack of family leave policies in DC.

But I am not only here on behalf of my clients. I'm here on my own behalf, too. As a self employed person, I don't have the typical benefits that come with many traditional workplaces. I don't have a backup plan in case I get sick, a family member needs my assistance during a medical crisis or when I become pregnant. I will be proactively opting into the paid family leave program because it is such a necessity in my life. I hope to grow my business to the point where I need to hire employees. I would want to offer them benefits that include paid leave. Without this program, I could never afford to do so.

I hope to continue building a life, career and community in the same city where my friends and family live. I do worry about the ability to take time off as I start a family at some point in the next few years.

Given the changes to the bill in this week's Discussion Draft, I am concerned that the very limited definition of family excludes my family members who I would be called on to help take care of. If my aging parents were to become ill, I wouldn't be able to care for them and continue working for myself without jeopardizing my financial stability.

I don't like to think about my stunning nieces getting sick or needing additional medical care, but when I do I hope that my city can support my responsibilities as a loving auntie. But the new draft does not provide this support because the limited definition of family also excludes my sister and nieces. If a child got very sick or had a long-term illness, or if one of them did, it would be necessary to have another set of hands. I would be that extra pair of hands, and paid

leave with a broad definition of family would allow me to do so without taking a personal financial hit.

I urge you to recognize that there are many configurations of families in DC and that the people who might have the responsibility to care for others may fall outside the limited relationships of an adult caring for a child or for their partner that you have in the Discussion Draft bill.

Thank you for your time.

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**PUBLIC HEARING ON
B21-0415:
UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015
Testimony of Matt Erickson, 76 Words**

My name is Matt Erickson and I am business owner in Ward 5 and a homeowner here in DC also in Ward 5. I'm here to speak on behalf of the Universal Paid Leave Act as a way to keep Washington DC a successful "creative class" city.

Paid family and medical leave is an important social justice issue. But I believe it is an important economic growth issue, as well.

I am the co-founder and co-owner of 76 Words, a small media and strategy firm currently based in NOMA. I note that my firm is primarily minority-owned.

We specialize in political consulting for "inside-the-beltway" type of groups who are based in Washington. But thanks to the internet and technology, the truth is we could base the firm pretty much anywhere: Maryland or Virginia of course, but also New Jersey, Iowa or Minnesota.

But we choose to be here in The District, and there are a few reasons for that..

One is the quality of life of the city itself, which has been my home for more than 20 years, and why I just bought and moved into a new home in Eckington.

But ultimately, we're here because we believe that being in DC ensures that we can find and keep the best workers around. We're a business that functions every election cycle--indeed every day--based on our ability to help clients communicate creatively and effectively, often under challenging circumstances.

Studies show that businesses like to locate where the workers they need are--they go where the talent is. And the talent goes where their work will be rewarded. Our business will succeed or fail based on the talent of our workforce. We need people who can do good work, and we believe that we can find those people in the District.

But Washington will only be able to return and grow that exceptionally talented workforce if it prioritizes the quality of life, which includes access to benefits like paid family and medical leave.

Paid family and medical leave sends a message to our most creative, most valued, and most mobile workers that if they come to DC and stay here, they will be treated fairly in a time of family crisis – no matter who their boss is, no matter how far-sighted their company is, no matter how fair their HR department is. No matter what.

A robust paid family leave program will help ensure that Washington remains the leader, not only in industries native to this city, but also for industries that could (and will) set up shop anywhere in the country.

We all have the same goals: To build a stronger DC economy and to maintain and grow DC's position as one of the most influential and important cities in America. In order to do that, we have to make it a place the most talented professionals in the country want to live and work. For these reasons, as a small business owner I urge you to pass a strong Universal Paid Leave Act.

Veronica Brown

Testimony to Support the Universal Paid Leave Act

February 11, 2016

Good afternoon. I'd like to thank the DC council for allowing us to share our stories today. My name is Veronica Brown. I've lived in DC for two years and I currently reside in NoMa located in ward 6.

Last year I suffered a severe ankle sprain on the job while working at a restaurant in Columbia Heights and though my health care was covered under their insurance, I was unable to return to work for two weeks due to my inability to walk, much less carry out a serving shift on my ankle. They also put a cast brace on me which really restricted my movement.

My ignorance of the Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Act of 2008 meant that I did not even take advantage of the 3 sick leave days I might have accrued during my employment there the previous year. Even if I had been able to take advantage of those sick days, it would not have been enough to cover my needs throughout the two weeks I was incapacitated.

Every day I was not able to work was a loss of \$100, the amount I usually earned from tips. I was forced to use my savings to cover living expenses during those two weeks, which were not substantial due to having recently graduated. Financial need led me to return to work after those two weeks, and to take off my brace even though my ankle had not sufficiently healed. This has meant a longer healing period and two smaller sprains from improper healing during the last couple of months. It was a necessary choice but not one I would have made had I had the possibility of support from a comprehensive medical leave policy.

I am afraid that this choice means I will have problems with my ankle for the rest of my life. I am glad it is not anything more serious, but it does make me afraid of what would happen if something more serious were to happen in the future. The personal medical leave and progressive wage replacement rate in this bill would have saved me a lot of physical pain and financial stress as I attempted to get on my feet after graduating. After all, that's what most of us want—the opportunity to work and earn enough to support ourselves and the knowledge that should something unexpected happen that directly prevents us from doing that, we won't end up in financial ruin. As you consider changes to the bill, please do not lower the wage replacement rates any more. It is important to support the lowest earners in DC, because a personal medical emergency like mine is the fastest route to financial ruin.

Thank you for your time today.

Sade Moonsammy

February 9, 2016

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015

Chairman Mendelson and other members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Paid Family Leave. My name is Sade Moonsammy and I am here today as both a Ward 5 resident and Parent Organizer for Young Invincibles, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization based in DC that supports the Paid Family Leave Coalition.

Young Invincibles is a Millennial research and advocacy group dedicated to raising the voices of young adults ages 18-34 on economic issues affecting our generation. Last year, we published a report called *Find Time: Millennial Parents, Poverty, and Rising Costs*. In our report, we highlight that 83 percent of new mothers are Millennials between the ages of 18 and 34. Yet, younger workers, particularly those in entry-level or lower-wage positions, are less likely to have access to paid family leave at the time in their lives when they need it the most.

As a childbirth educator, doula and breastfeeding peer counselor at the Family Health and Birth Center in DC, I've worked with many young families who would have benefited from this bill. During my first year at the birth center, I worked with a young 17-year-old mom who was in the foster care system when she gave birth to her first child. She was adamant about getting her baby off to the right start. She worked part time and went to school full time and was excited to breastfeed her baby. Unfortunately, just one week after giving birth to her baby she had to return to working at a retail store in Adams Morgan. She was unable to have the appropriate time with her baby, unable to successfully breastfeed and later gave up trying. The DC paid leave bill would give young parents greater economic security and ensure that young parents don't have to put their health or their newborn's health at risk because they don't have access to paid leave.

Along these lines, it is important that the wage replacement part of the program benefit the people who need it the most, like this young mother. If the wage replacement is not meaningful, low-wage earners will not be able to take advantage of the system they are effectively paying into. Please do not lower the rates any more than you have in the Discussion Draft.

Once again, I would like to say thank you for listening to my testimony today.

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015
Testimony of Valencia Campbell
Representing 9to5, National Association of Working Women
on Thursday, February 11, 2016

Good evening. My name is Valencia Campbell, and I am a member of the DC Action Team of 9to5, National Association of Working Women. 9to5 is a 43-year old national membership organization. Most of our members are women in low-wage jobs, organizing together for workplace fairness, equal opportunity and economic security. I am proud to represent 9to5 and speak in support of the DC paid leave proposal in front of you tonight.

Virtually all of us need time at some point to care for our own or a family member's serious illness, or to welcome a new child into our family. Yet only 13% of U. S. workers have access to paid leave through their jobs. And for workers in the lowest-paid jobs, who are primarily women and people of color, that percentage plummets to the low single digits.

The federal Family and Medical Leave Act, which 9to5 helped pass 22 years ago, has been used across the country to provide job security to employees who have needed time to care for loved ones. But FMLA doesn't cover 40% of the private sector workforce and, because it's unpaid, many who are eligible cannot afford to use it. Our nation's policies haven't kept up with changes in the workforce and in families.

Demographic trends make paid leave more critical now than ever. More women are in the workforce, nearly all children live in households with working parents, women are primary or co-breadwinners in two-thirds of families, more people are caring for elderly and ill loved ones, and our population is aging. Without access to paid leave, far too many women and men jeopardize their immediate financial stability and their future economic security when they put their health and their families first.

As 9to5 member Shelby Ramirez Martinez, explains, “When my daughter needed surgery and my elderly father needed immediate medical attention at the same time, times were tough. FMLA gave me the time to take care of them, but without pay, I had to choose between paying rent and buying medicine for my family. It took me four months just to partially catch up on my bills.”

Progressive wage replacement is especially important to our members. Low-wage workers are especially vulnerable when they lose income. This program should not exacerbate income inequality. 90% is already the bare minimum of affordability, please don't lower the paycheck replacement rate. If we do not make sure that low-wage workers receive substantial wage replacement, we cannot claim that this bill serves all members of our DC community.

You have an opportunity tonight to support DC's working families, to provide the peace of mind that comes with knowing you can take the time you need to care for loved ones without putting your paycheck or job at risk. On behalf of 9to5, I urge you to vote yes for paid leave.



Date: February 11, 2016

To: The Committee of the Whole

Subject: Oral Testimony on: DISCUSSION DRAFT of Bill 21-415 – “Universal Paid Leave Act of 2016” as issued on February 8, 2016

Presented by: Norma Byrd, Vice President, Business Promotion Consultants, Inc. (BPC)

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to provide comments on the “Universal Paid Leave Act”. My comments are on the DISCUSSION DRAFT of this bill as issued on February 8, 2016.

My name is Norma Byrd, and I am Vice President of Business Promotion Consultants, Inc. (BPC). I was born and raised in the District of Columbia. I am a wife, a mother of 2, a grandmother of 3, and a resident of Ward 4. I have dealt with the issue of pregnancy, caring for a parent with dementia, now deceased, and helping to manage the in-home care of a gracefully aging 94-year-old mother-in-law.

I am also part-owner and Vice President of BPC, which is a small, local business that has been operating in the District of Columbia since 1981. So I have personal experience from an employee’s perspective, dealing with some of the “qualifying events” for which the Universal Paid Leave Act would provide relief; and I have experience from an employer’s perspective, dealing with the consequences of an employee’s periodic, erratic, and extended absences from work.

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The concept of Universal Paid Leave is noble. The Council is to be commended for entertaining such a bill. But while the DISCUSSION DRAFT makes several adjustments to the prior version of the Universal Paid Leave Act, those changes still do not warrant my support for this bill. This is because the Universal Paid Leave Act:

- May cause our company to reduce our already generous paid leave fringe benefits to our employees;
- It may affect our company’s ability to afford to continue to offer major medical insurance for our employees;
- It may result in lost revenue since we will be unable to bill our customers for employees who are not working;
- It will increase our labor costs, forcing us to replace and backfill vacancies created by absent employees;
- It will reduce our profitability, making our firm have to do more with less; and
- It may cause our firm to reconsider the benefits of remaining in the District of Columbia.

While the DISCUSSION DRAFT of the Universal Paid Leave Act reduces the amount of paid leave from 16 weeks to 12 weeks, it still places the cost of funding this program on the shoulders of DC-based firms, such as mine.

Subject: Oral Testimony on: DISCUSSION DRAFT of Bill 21-415 – “Universal

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In order for BPC to be able to remain in the District, to continue doing business in the District, to be in compliance with the Universal Paid Leave Act, and to pay for the larger labor force required, we would have to double our billing rates, double our contract values, and double our revenue. Of course, we cannot do that unilaterally. We may therefore default on current contracts, and be noncompetitive on future business opportunities.

I do not believe these consequences are what the Council intends with the Universal Paid Leave Act. Therefore, for these reasons, as a DC-based, small, local business owner, I strongly recommend that the Council not pass the Universal Paid Leave Act so that we will not have to reduce the amount of paid holiday, vacation, and sick leave we currently allow our employees, stop offering our employees major medical insurance, or move our business outside of the District of Columbia.

A more detailed discussion of these issues is included in the written testimony which I have already submitted.

Thank you.



Date: February 11, 2016

To: The Committee of the Whole

Subject: Written Testimony on: DISCUSSION DRAFT of Bill 21-415 – “Universal Paid Leave Act of 2016” as issued on February 8, 2016

Presented by: Norma Byrd, Vice President, Business Promotion Consultants, Inc. (BPC)

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to provide comments on the “Universal Paid Leave Act of 2016”. My comments are on the DISCUSSION DRAFT of this bill as issued on February 8, 2016.

My name is Norma Byrd, and I am Vice President of Business Promotion Consultants, Inc. (BPC). I was born and raised in the District of Columbia. I am a wife, a mother of 2, a grandmother of 3, and a resident of Ward 4. I have dealt with the issue of pregnancy, caring for a parent with dementia, now deceased, and helping to manage the in-home care of a gracefully aging 94-year-old mother-in-law.

I am also part-owner and Vice President of BPC, which is a small, local business that has been operating in the District of Columbia since 1981. So I have personal experience from an employee’s perspective, dealing with some of the “qualifying events” for which the Universal Paid Leave Act would provide relief; and I have experience from an employer’s perspective, dealing with the consequences of an employee’s periodic, erratic, and extended absences from work.

Summary Consequences of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2016

The concept of Universal Paid Leave is noble. The Council is to be commended for entertaining such a bill. But while the DISCUSSION DRAFT makes several adjustments to the prior version of the Universal Paid Leave Act, those changes still do not warrant my support for this bill. This is because the Universal Paid Leave Act may:

- Reduce our paid leave fringe benefits;
- Increase our net health insurance premium costs;
- Result in lost revenue;

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Subject: Comments on: DISCUSSION DRAFT of Bill 21-415 – “Universal Paid Leave Act of 2016” as issued on February 8, 2016

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- Increase our labor costs;
- Thereby reduce our profitability; and
- Encourage employers to relocate outside of the District of Columbia.

While the DISCUSSION DRAFT of the Universal Paid Leave Act, reduces the amount of paid leave from 16 weeks to 12 weeks, it expands the “eligible employee” to include all persons (not just DC residents) who work for any organization operating in DC except for those persons who work for either the Federal Government or the District Government. Importantly, it places the cost of funding this program on the shoulders of DC-based firms, such as mine.

Also, with regard to the expanded definition of an “eligible employee”, the Universal Paid Leave Act will reward Maryland and Virginia residents for working in the District. The District Government cannot tax non-resident wages. But the Universal Paid Leave Act will pay generous benefits to non-resident employees. This will inflate the costs of the program.

Reduced Other Corporate Paid Leave Fringe Benefits

BPC currently has 30 employees. We generate our revenue two ways. We are a reseller of water utility products, and we provide consulting services and staff augmentation services to various government agencies and to the private sector. The services side of our business generates more than 60% of our revenue. This revenue comes from the billable hours of our employees.

We currently offer our employees 88 hours of paid holiday leave, 54 hours of paid sick leave, and 80 hours of paid vacation leave per year. That totals 222 hours of paid leave. Requiring us to also allow our employees an additional 12 weeks of leave, or 480 additional hours of leave, would mean that we could have an employee absent from the job for 702 work hours or 17 work weeks. That is absence for up to 34 percent, or one third, of a work year. That leaves only 66 percent of a work year available for an employee to work; and in spite of that absenteeism rate, the Universal Paid Leave Act would still require that the absent employee should be allowed to keep their job.

The Universal Paid Leave Act will leave us no alternative but to reduce the amount of paid leave we currently provide for our employees.

Subject: Comments on: DISCUSSION DRAFT of Bill 21-415 – “Universal Paid Leave Act of 2016” as issued on February 8, 2016

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Increased Net Corporate Health Insurance Premium Costs

We also provide our employees with major medical insurance. Through payroll deduction, the employee pays a portion of the premium. If an employee is not working, there can be no payroll deduction for that employee, hence, there will be no contribution from that employee towards their portion of the insurance premium. If we will be required to allow non-working employees to remain on our major medical plan, this will result in increased insurance premium costs for our firm if we have to pay the employee's portion of the premium. If we don't pay the insurance premium for the non-paying, non-working Universal Paid Leave employee, we may have to drop that employee from our major medical insurance plan. This could ultimately result in our firm not offering any of our employees major medical insurance.

Lost Corporate Revenue

The most significant impact that passage of this bill will have on our firm is lost revenue. Several of our contracts are performed at our customers' worksites. Our employees are recruited, hired and trained on a contract-by-contract basis, to perform a specific customer's business process, to that customer's performance standard.

Our contracts are negotiated in advance of our performing the work. The value of a contract, i.e., the maximum amount of money that BPC will be paid, is based on a negotiated quantity of pre-screened and trained BPC employees performing specific project tasks for a specific quantity of billable hours during specific duty hours each workday.

The fundamental assumption in the financial model that represents BPC's consulting services contracts is that billable employees are available for 100 percent of the billable hours on a contract, as determined by the negotiated project schedule. I say again, 100 percent of the billable hours, not 66 percent. But the Universal Paid Leave Act threatens to require BPC to allow 34 percent absenteeism (for qualifying events).

Sixty six percent was a failing grade when I was in school. Sixty six percent is a failing grade on any BPC past performance rating.

There are consequences if BPC employees fail to perform specific tasks within specific time frames. The consequences to BPC include financial penalties as well as termination of our contracts for failure to perform.

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Increased Corporate Labor Costs

Because there are time constraints and penalties associated with the performance standards of much of the work our employees perform, whenever an employee is absent, other employees may have to attempt to do absent employees' work, in addition to their own, in the same work period. This is not always physically possible, based on the nature of the work. Further, requiring employees to assume an additional workload without additional compensation causes employees to feel overworked and underpaid and ultimately affects employee moral and productivity. Overworked, tired, demoralized employees have an increased error rate. Our customers have not hired us to make errors. They hired us to provide competent employees who are capable of performing the required work to contract-performance-standard stipulated levels of accuracy and in accordance with contract schedules.

In order to meet contract performance standard levels of productivity, it could become necessary for employees to do the work of absent employees after they finish their own assigned work. Their work days could last longer than 8 hours. Federal labor laws require the payment of overtime for employees who work more than 40 hours each week. But our contracts do not allow us to unilaterally decide that we want to bill our customers at overtime rates. So the Universal Paid Leave Act may further reduce our profitability by forcing us to pay overtime to employees not on leave, to meet our contractual commitments, while being unable to recoup the overtime expenses from our customers.

A proactive way to deal with a 34 percent absenteeism rate, and the impact that it would have on our ability to fulfill our contractual responsibilities, is to establish a labor pool of qualified and trained personnel, who can fill in when specific employees are absent. But it would be naïve of BPC to hope that if we recruit and train them, and then don't pay them, that they will sit by patiently, indefinitely, and wait for us to call for a paid opportunity. BPC cannot afford to maintain a pool of qualified paid people, on standby, waiting for our billable employees to take “intermittent” leave for up to 34 percent of a person year.

Reduced Corporate Profitability

The Universal Paid Leave Act demonstrates how a piece of legislation that is apparently relatively inexpensive to employers and well-intentioned to employees can have snowballing unintentioned consequences on employers.

Subject: Comments on: DISCUSSION DRAFT of Bill 21-415 – “Universal Paid Leave Act of 2016” as issued on February 8, 2016

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Although the program “tax” to employers is stipulated to not exceed one percent of payroll, it is just one more tax on the growing list of what it costs to do business in the District of Columbia. It is another item in the negative column that works against the efforts of the business attraction folks who work in public and private economic development, and it is another incentive for companies in the District of Columbia to seek more business friendly jurisdictions elsewhere.

Also, as explained earlier in my testimony, the Universal Paid Leave Act will cause us to reduce other paid leave fringe benefits, it may increase the net cost of our corporate health insurance or require us to stop offering health insurance altogether, it will cause us to lose revenue, and if we try to remain responsive to our contracts it may cause us to increase labor costs. All of these things will reduce our small business’ corporate profitability, and really cause us to question the benefits of either staying in the District of Columbia, or even staying in business.

Conclusion

In order for BPC to be able to remain in the District, to continue doing business in the District, to be in compliance with the Universal Paid Leave Act, and to pay for the larger labor force required, we would have to double our billing rates, double our contract values, and double our revenue. Of course, we cannot do that unilaterally. We may, therefore, default on current contracts, and be noncompetitive on future business opportunities.

I do not believe these consequences are what the Council intends with the Universal Paid Leave Act. Therefore, for these reasons, as a DC-based, small, local business owner, I strongly recommend that the Council not pass the Universal Paid Leave Act so that we will not have to reduce the amount of paid holiday, vacation, and sick leave we currently allow our employees, stop offering our employees major medical insurance, or move our business outside of the District of Columbia.

Thank you again for allowing me this opportunity to present my comments.

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015

Testimony of Jordan Bleck

in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

My name is Jordan Bleck and I am a resident of Ward 1, here to support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

In November of 2014 I was the victim of a workplace accident. I was struck in the back of the head by a heavy object. My coworkers told me later that I should have gone to the hospital and that they were surprised I was even conscious. I don't remember any of this. After the accident, I couldn't stay awake for more than a few hours at a time. I had extreme difficulty forming new memories and developed a stutter that made it nearly impossible to communicate. It took a week for me to be convinced that I needed to see a doctor; I was not even cognizant of how severe my situation was.

I was diagnosed with a concussion and traumatic brain injury. The doctor I saw wrote that I needed to see a specialist and that I shouldn't return to work. But I couldn't take unpaid leave to recover because I needed to pay my rent.

After I returned to work, the quality of my work plummeted because I was not fully recovered. Every day I struggled to stay awake - a common symptom of post concussive syndrome. And every day, I had to relearn basic aspects of my job. For months, trying to speak felt like subvocalizing alphabet soup. I'd forget where my car was, or to turn off the gas stove. I was scared because I didn't feel like myself.

Nearly a year after my injury, I decided to resign so that I could focus on my health. Resigning wasn't what I wanted to do, and it would not have been necessary if I could have taken paid medical leave. My unnecessarily drawn-out recovery hurt both me and my company. I take great pride in my work and not being able to perform at the level I expected of myself was very hard.

I am not sure that my situation would have been covered under the new draft bill, which seems to exclude certain conditions. I can't imagine this bill would mean to exclude a condition like mine, forcing a choice between health and financial stability. That is, of course, the reason we are all here today, and why I am asking the Council to support a strong paid family leave bill that provides twelve, if not sixteen, weeks of coverage and progressive wage replacement to everyone who lives and works in D.C. What happened to me shouldn't have to happen to anyone else. Thank you.

Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
Thursday, Feb 11
DC Council of the Whole
Testimony of Farah Fosse in Support
Resident Ward 4

Good afternoon Councilmembers,

My name is Farah Fosse and I am a Ward 4 homeowner. I know many of you through my work preserving affordable housing, but I'm here today, with my partner Brian and my baby August, as both a professional and a parent to testify in support of universal paid family and medical leave.

My son August is just over 16 weeks old. Brian and I both made the tough decision to scale back work in order to be with him. Though we are taking a big income cut, we are considered super-"lucky" because Brian has an employer who let him reduce his hours while keeping his benefits (not to mention, his job).

Brian's employer, a small government contractor, was willing to make this work to keep a trained employee. I've heard employers say that they couldn't manage if a key employee took leave. But we've all seen it work when someone inevitably does take leave or a position becomes vacant for a while.

As I mentioned, my son is about 16 weeks old. Besides that meaning that I am loopy for him, it means I'm just plain loopy. I haven't slept for more than 3 hours in a stretch since October. I went to a work meeting and said that I was going to make sure everyone was *held*. I meant to say *heard*. We all know what it's like when someone comes back to work who should be at home, whether it's caring for their dying mother or cuddling their new baby. They are exhausted. They are sneaking to the bathroom to call hospice or check in with daycare. They are online looking at Web MD or Baby Center. They are not giving 100%. Having just completed 16 weeks with a new baby, I can say that it's the minimum amount of time to adjust.

Other people who don't have paid leave simply quit. In my work with low-income DC residents I've been surprised by how many women I've met who decided to quit their jobs just before or after having a baby. They figured that if they weren't being paid, they may as well quit and have the flexibility to take the time off they needed. This is not good for these moms, who lose opportunities for raises or promotions, and it's not good for DC, since we know these women may be pushed to rely on public benefits.

Having worked as a manager, I know how much time I invested each time we hired. To me, even at a small non-profit, it would be well worth it to pay an extra payroll tax and keep a trained employee on staff.

I have been proud to call DC home for 15 years and proud to work to make this an inclusive and just city. Paid family leave is reasonable, fair and the right thing to do. And, living in the city

with the most progressive fund for paid family and medical leave in the country would make me even more proud to continue to live and work here. I encourage you to pass the Universal Paid Leave Act, covering people who work in the District for a full 16 weeks of necessary family leave.

Thank you.

Farah Fosse
1317 Decatur St NW, WDC 20011
FarahDC@gmail.com

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015

February 11, 2016

Submitted to the Committee of the Whole
Testimony of Sean Siperstein
in favor of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

Good evening. My name is Sean Siperstein. I am a 4-year resident of Glover Park in Ward 3, and I practice law in the District. And I am proud to be here, with Jews United for Justice and so many other members of our community, to express why you should enact the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015 in its strongest possible form.

I sit here as part of a class of workers critical to DC's economy that lacks job security and many benefits. I am a temporary contract employee, working on an as-needed, at-will basis for some of the nation's leading law firms. This is a stressful but increasingly uncommon career situation in the legal profession. Many of my colleagues and I have directly benefitted from this Council's strengthening and expansion of paid sick leave, and for that I am grateful. But for those of us facing long-term family challenges, dipping into a limited amount of leave intended for short-term illness isn't enough, particularly because we are contingent employees who are paid on an hourly basis. For example, one of my colleagues recently had triplets who were born 8 weeks premature. He needed 16 weeks of compensated time away from work to tend to his wife and newborns, but only had access to limited sick days. And in recent weeks, I have lost track of the number of colleagues who have worked while ill -- seriously so, in some cases -- in order to save up on leave for family health purposes. One of my colleagues recently stayed up all night

coughing up blood, but reported to work the next morning, because she needed to preserve her leave to care for her parents (and support them financially).

It is unfathomable to me, by the way, that under the new bill's narrow definition of family, that colleague's parents would not count as eligible for her care. Nor would my own.

Indeed, this legislation would provide a **critical** backstop for me as a young professional building a life and career in the District. I am not yet a husband or father, despite my mother's growing anxiety, but I am a son and caregiver. I am blessed that, in the past decade, I was able to care for my parents during sudden, significant health issues-- including kidney failure and a transplant-- but that was because I was fortunate to live near them and work for an employer who offered paid family leave. You shouldn't have to win the boss lottery to have access to paid family leave. Now that my parents have retired to Southern California, a stronger safety net-- including a strong paid leave policy that covers parental care-- would go a long way in giving me the confidence and ability to stay in the District and build my life and career here, despite the growing cost of living.

I am cognizant that I am fortunate in many ways. I have a career that pays more than a living wage, and family that does not require my financial support. Passing a strong, ambitious paid family leave policy, with progressive wage indexing, can make the District a beacon of economic fairness **and** sustainability for **all** members of our community.

Thank you so much for your time. I hope to see each of you cast your vote in support of this absolutely vital piece of legislation.

Testimony of Jessie Blumin, RN, Student Midwife
February 11, 2016
PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015

Thank you for having me here tonight.

My name is Jessie Blumin. I've lived in DC for four years, now in Ward 4, working as a labor and delivery nurse and student midwife, supporting families as they welcome children at Georgetown Hospital, Providence Hospital, and, currently, George Washington University Hospital.

In 2014, I gave birth to my daughter. The contrast between the family leave that my husband and I were able to take, versus what many of my patients have experienced, is shocking and deeply unethical.

When our daughter was born, I was working full-time as a nurse and attending graduate school. I was lucky to be able to combine parental leave and short term disability so that I could spend 4 months at home with her. My husband was able to take 6 weeks of paid leave—and believe me, I needed him every minute of those 6 weeks. Later, I was able to transition back to school because my husband took another 7 weeks of paid parental leave. All together, the time we had with our daughter helped us feel like a solid family.

On the other hand, one of my patients delivered her baby boy 3 months premature. He went into the neonatal intensive care unit, and she returned to work just one week later—two and a half months before her baby could come home. She only had six weeks of paid leave, and she decided to save five to be with him at home. She wanted to be with her baby while he was fighting for his life, but she had to leave him alone in the hospital because she couldn't afford to take unpaid leave or risk losing her job.

That working mom deserves the same good things in life that I do. So many other families have no leave at all. This just isn't right.

Physically recovering from birth, establishing breastfeeding, and helping your baby sleep takes an enormous amount of time and energy. I know this as a mom and I've seen dozens and dozens of DC families go through that demanding and crucial newborn period. **I don't want this city to be a place where there is such a stark divide between people with decent jobs that make it possible for us to give our babies the love and care they deserve and people who are treated as if they and their children are less valuable or important than me and mine.** All our city's children deserve better.

My patient and I both needed a full 16 weeks with our babies. I hope you will change the draft to go back to the original plan for those of us who need that time. And please make sure that people's jobs get held for them sooner - for someone living paycheck to paycheck, having your job be protected is as important as getting paid leave. People with babies in the NICU should not have to worry about whether they'll have a job to go back to.

I look forward to the next revision of the bill addressing my concerns. Thank you.

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415:
UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015
February 11, 2015

Submitted to the Committee of the Whole

Testimony of Daniel Michelson-Horowitz
In Favor of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

Good evening and thank you for your time. My name is Daniel Michelson-Horowitz and I am here to express my support for the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. As a proud 8-year District resident and activist with Jews United for Justice, I feel strongly that this bill is the least we can do to express our family-first values. As a federal worker, I want this benefit, and hope I will be able to participate in this program.

This issue became personal to me when, sixteen months ago, my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. When she called to tell me the news, I could hear the uncertainty in her voice. She did not yet know her prognosis or treatment options.

At the time, I had recently begun a new job with the Federal government, where I still work. Within a few weeks, she had scheduled surgery, and I yearned to be there to support her. But I had accumulated very little vacation time, and even less in savings because of student loans and, simply, DC's high cost of living. Ultimately, I could not afford to visit her before her surgery or during her recovery.

Thankfully, my father was there with my mom to take care of her, drive her to appointments, and support her emotionally. What would she have done without him? Would I have sacrificed my job and income to be there?

Ultimately, my family is lucky. My mother recovered from that surgery well and did not require radiation or chemotherapy. I am happy to say that she is now in remission. What would we have done if she was still in treatment, now that my father is unable to drive?

I want to address certain changes made by the discussion draft circulated this week. When I wrote this testimony I was relieved that, under the introduced bill, no one in my circumstance would ever have to go through what my family and I did. Then, before I even had the chance to share my story, I found out that my experience would no longer be covered, both because I am a Federal employee and because my own mother paradoxically does not count as "family" under the new narrow definition. In a diverse and progressive city that recognizes the complexities of

the modern family structure, it feels incredibly paternalistic to be told who does and does not count as “family.”

As a Federal worker, I would be more than willing – indeed, thrilled – to be included in this bill, and I know that many of my colleagues feel the same way. I have seen coworkers exhaust their vacation and sick days taking care of a child or an ailing parent, or themselves after an illness or family tragedy. Do Federal workers not deserve this benefit as much as any other DC resident or worker? In fact, the Paid Leave program would make me more likely to continue living in DC as a Federal worker than to move to Maryland or Virginia, despite the high cost of living.

To this day, I feel guilty that I could not be there to support my mom and dad. In the 21st century, no Washingtonian should have to worry about maintaining a modest income when they are recovering from an illness, supporting a relative, or bonding with a newborn. This bill, as it was introduced, is the absolute minimum we can do to put all families first. It makes good economic sense and, more importantly, it’s simply the right thing to do. For your sake and mine, I urge you to pass the bill immediately.

Thank you for your leadership, vision, and time.

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
February 11, 2016
PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015
Testimony of Daniel Mauer

Good evening. My name is Dan Mauer and I am a resident of Ward 1 in Mt. Pleasant and a member of Jews United for Justice.

Unlike many of those who have testified eloquently today, the Universal Paid Leave Act likely wouldn't have a major impact on me. I'm proud and fortunate to be a union member, and I have generous leave benefits, and I neither have aging parents nor children, so--knock on wood--I am less likely than many others to need family leave. Of course, with two grandmothers pushing 95, the option of family leave is great to have, and I hope we can return to a commonsense definition of family that would allow me to care for them.

I also want to note other people who won't be particularly impacted by this bill--responsible employers. Many employers already provide paid family leave, but under this bill, they will be able to instead reinvest the funds used for that purpose to provide even greater benefits or to otherwise reinvest in their workforces. That's why a number of small businesses have already endorsed the bill.

Even irresponsible employers are not terribly impacted by the bill. Because the bill is structured using a very low tax, rather than a mandate as has been proposed in legislation elsewhere, the burden on any employer under this legislation is simply very low.

Yet, there is one group that will be deeply, deeply impacted by this bill—the low-income workers who need it most. Many low-income workers can't take any family leave, even those whose jobs currently provide leave benefits, because they can't afford to live on the much lower replacement wages. That's why it's so important that this bill provides progressive wage replacement. It means that those who have so often been denied the opportunity to take leave in the past will actually be able to take it. 90% is already the bare minimum of affordability, so please don't lower the paycheck replacement rate.

Let's take care of D.C.'s hard working residents and pass the strongest possible Universal Paid Leave Act. Thanks in advance for your consideration of my views and thanks in particular to Councilmembers Silverman and Grosso, along with my own terrific councilmember, Councilmember Nadeau, for introducing this bill.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
Submitted to the Committee of the Whole
Testimony of Marjorie Middleton

February 11, 2016

My name is Marjorie Middleton and I am testifying in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. Until the end of 2013, I worked in Washington, DC as a certified Lead Inspector and Outreach Specialist, making sure that children in every ward were not being poisoned by lead.

Although I no longer work in DC, I want my story heard because living without Paid Family Leave is almost impossible.

More than 20 years ago, my parents retired to South Carolina, on my father's birthplace island, St. Helena. In June 2011, I learned that my beloved father, Robert, had cancer.

My family, a close-knit bunch, all went with my parents to visit an oncologist at Johns Hopkins University Hospital. The doctor was nice and offered chemotherapy while letting us know the cancer was already Stage 4; in his lungs, lymph nodes and liver. We all wanted him to get treatment here, where we all live. But my Dad wanted to go home. So they did. My 81 year old mother got a church friend to drive them to Charleston, 1.5 hours away, for chemo every week.

Eventually, my siblings and I decided I would go to South Carolina and help my parents full time. My son and daughter were away at college, and I am divorced, so there was nobody else at my home. I spoke to my job, who valued my work and offered to save my position for me, but I would have to take leave without pay.

I did what I had to do for my parents, but was left without money or health insurance. That meant my children could not depend on Mom while they were at school. My siblings paid my rent and car insurance while I was gone.

I spent 7 months with my parents before my father died. He had suffered immensely, but my greatest memories are of his strength and his ability not to complain or cry...or scream. Those were the hardest, but most precious times of my life, spending time with the man I admired more than anyone. It hurts that, under the bill's new draft language, he would not count as a member of my family eligible to receive my care.

Everyone is likely to go through the illness of a family member at some time. No one in the United States should have to worry because they have no PAID Family Leave. We need a paid family leave program that supports everyone who lives and works in DC, and that recognizes how diverse and unique our families are. Let's make this a right!

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
February 11, 2016
Submitted to the Committee of the Whole
Testimony of Hannah Lantos

I'd like to thank the Council for the opportunity to testify today in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. My name is Hannah Lantos. I live in Kingman Park in Ward 6 of the District and this is my third year living in DC. I recently completed a PhD in Public Health. Thus, my interest in paid family leave is both personal and professional.

Professionally, I know that in states where paid leave is now law, research suggests that babies are better off when their mothers and fathers are able to stay home with them for longer. Additionally, parents are better off too. Mothers are more likely to be psychologically healthy and recover physically. They are more likely to still be employed and making *more* money after 6 months if they had paid leave. Full leave is important for non-childbearing parents too (usually, but certainly not always, fathers). These parents are more likely to bond with their child and share tasks more equitably with their partners, supporting longer, healthier relationships.

For me personally, this bill is a reason to stay in the District. It provides incentive to buy a home, raise kids, and pay taxes here. Yet raising kids in this city is increasingly out of the financial reach of many, and I worry that it will be for me too. I listen to friends make decisions about what they can afford and can understand why moving away is appealing. Cities are in my blood and my academic research, and I'm committed to living in one. Paid family leave makes the option of staying in this city - which is not near my own family - a much more compelling one.

To that end, I want to address some changes in the draft bill that concern me. First, as I think about buying a home here, I want to know that I will be covered. I work in Maryland for a company with excellent leave policies covered by a creative combination of sick days, vacation leave, and disability insurance. DC's new program should not disadvantage those of us who work for the government or who find an opportunity worth pursuing in a neighboring state. Everyone should be covered and if they choose to, they can opt out.

As a woman in my 30s with no children right now, I am more likely to need caregiving leave to support my current family: my parents, grandparents, or siblings. My grandmother is currently ill and my mother and her sisters have rushed to care for her. My mother is lucky to have some flexibility and to have sick days that cover emergency leave. All DC residents should have that time when needed. Watching an ailing parent or grandparent die is hardship enough without

needing to figure out how to pay rent. I hope you will honor all types of families and make it possible for people of extended relationships to provide care to someone in need.

Finally, I am also concerned about the exclusion of mental health coverage. The World Health Organization calculates a measure called Disability Adjusted Life Years - or DALYs - which can be thought of as a measure of lost years of healthy life. Mental health is quickly becoming one of the leading causes of DALYs in every country around the world. Though my own mental health needs have never resulted in missing work, I have struggled when my insurance companies did not want to pay for mental health treatments. Their incredibly low reimbursement rates and few in-network providers also show without a doubt how little emphasis we place on treating and caring for those suffering from poor mental health. Anyone struggling to access and pay for care and to get better will not recover if they are also struggling to pay rent or buy food. The Council should work with mental health care providers to define mental health needs in a way that can be minimally abused because mental health is an essential component of sick leave.

If the Council is serious about supporting its residents and workers facing serious life events, you won't exclude categories of residents, families, or health.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
February 11, 2016
Submitted to the Committee of the Whole
Testimony of Emily Schondelmyer

My name is Emily Schondelmyer and I support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. I am a resident of Logan Circle in Ward 2 with Councilman Jack Evans. I am a federal employee and have been living in the district for a bit over a year and half. My educational background is in family studies, specifically family demography, and because of this I have an extensive interest in paid family leave at not only the economic level but also sociological level.

Paid family leave will be an instrumental force in changing the narrative around what it means to be a caretaker *and* employee in the DMV. As a federal employee and DC resident, I would be more than willing to pay into a program that would not only benefit me but would benefit thousands of families in the DC area. I am very upset that the new version of the bill excludes me.

Personally, paid family leave is important to me because I have seen the current system. My coworkers have to ask for leave donations so that they can take time off due to difficult pregnancies or because their newborn is sick. Some of my female coworkers are even in the red in terms of leave. When they are back at work, the leave they accrue has to pay off this debt, and it can take a while before they have any of their own leave days again. I can only imagine the stress of knowing you cannot take off work when you need to or the feeling of burden when you have to ask someone else to risk not being able to use their own leave because they donated to you.

Paid family leave has more benefits than just personal as well. Paid family leave has been shown over and over again to retain women in the workforce, decrease the gender wage gap, and promote men's participation in early child rearing. Furthermore, with an aging nation, we must be attentive to adult workers who will soon be tending to elderly family members. We, as a community, should help take the lead and be an example to the nation of what it means to understand and adapt to the changing values and relationships of the current workforce. We are no longer stuck in a time where there is one designated caretaker- and because of this, we need to reimagine what it means to provide family leave.

The original bill proposed 16 weeks of paid leave, and now it is 12. While it's a step up, it represents only the minimum amount of time and pay new parents need to succeed. Other nations have recognized and adapted to this reality, but the US still is lagging far behind. An example of a nation that does not support caregiving while working is Japan, which is facing a rapidly declining population because women are opting to not have children because the costs of

childrearing and working are too high. We are heading that way and in the process we will lose valuable workers. Because paid family leave reduces burden and stress, increases economic freedom for families, and provides benefits to employers, I support this program. Thank you.

TESTIMONY OF ASHE MCGOVERN
ON BEHALF OF
CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS
LGBT RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATIONS PROJECT
Bill 21-415, the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
February 11, 2016

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon, and thank you for inviting me to speak with you today on Bill 21-415, the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. My name is Ashe McGovern, and I am a Policy Analyst with the LGBT Research and Communications Project at the Center for American Progress (CAP). CAP is an independent, nonpartisan think tank and policy institute that is dedicated to improving the lives of all Americans through bold, progressive ideas and concerted action. My primary role at CAP is to conduct research and develop policy related to poverty and economic security in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities.

The Universal Paid Leave Act will provide important protections for low-income families in D.C., and has the potential to significantly improve the lives of LGBT workers and their families, particularly those who are low-income and people of color.

As a result of its broad availability to all workers, comprehensive coverage, affordability and cost effectiveness, level of wage replacement, and availability without adverse employment consequences, we support the progressive intent of this bill.[1] In order to ensure it fully addresses the unique needs and vulnerabilities of LGBT workers and their families, however, we recommend two important amendments.

In my testimony today, I will focus on these two proposals that, if adopted, will strengthen this bill and help meet the Council's stated goal of protecting vulnerable D.C. workers and their families:

- First, we encourage the Council to adopt the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) definition of "child." This change will standardize the definition of child already used by members of the business community and ensure that child-family relationships will not be limited to legal and biological parentage.[2]

- Second, we propose that the Council adopt the federal Office of Personnel Management (OPM)'s definition of "family member." This change will ensure that all LGBT family relationships are fully recognized and protected, including relationships that are very closely, but not legally or biologically, related.[3]

BACKGROUND

LGBT workers and their families are more likely than their non-LGBT peers to live in poverty, face unemployment and experience workplace discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. As a result, laws like the Universal Paid Leave Act offer important workplace protections for this particularly vulnerable and job insecure community.

The United States is unique among advanced economies in its lack of uniform paid federal family and medical leave protections, particularly for low-wage workers. Nationally, only 12 percent of the private sector has access to paid family and medical leave, and only 40 percent has temporary disability insurance offered through their jobs.[4] Those workers who are least able to afford time off are much more likely than their peers to lack access to paid family and medical leave. High-income workers are more than five times as likely to have access to paid family leave as compared to low-wage workers.[5] This disparate access leaves too many low-income families vulnerable to losing their job or vital income during times of personal or familial medical necessity.

Contrary to popular belief, LGBT communities, particularly communities of color, are more likely than their peers to live at or below the poverty line, and, as a result, are in particular need of paid family and medical leave protections that extend to workers of all wages. There are many reasons for these high levels of poverty, including lack of protection from discrimination in healthcare, housing, employment and education; historical exclusion from social safety nets for families; and hostile school and home environments for LGBT youth, leading many LGBT young people to leave their homes at a young age, and subsequently experience poverty and homelessness.[6]

Even in D.C., where LGBT people are legally protected from workplace discrimination, unemployment and mistreatment persists, making protections from paid family and medical leave particularly vital. A 2015 D.C. report[7] found that members of the D.C. transgender community report extremely high rates of unemployment, with 36 percent being unemployed at the time of the survey compared to just 9 percent of D.C. residents, and over 40 percent having been denied at least one job due to being perceived as transgender. Workplace disparities are particularly pronounced for communities of color, both in D.C. and nationally. In D.C., black

transgender people had the highest rate of unemployment, at 55 percent. Recent analysis has found that LGBT people of color in the U.S. have higher rates of unemployment as compared to non-LGBT people of color,[8] while a survey of transgender people found that black transgender people had substantially higher rates of unemployment than white transgender people (28 percent compared to 12 percent).[9] Furthermore, studies suggest that because of discrimination and lack of access to adequate healthcare, LGBT communities experience poor overall health,[10] making their need for access to paid family and medical leave even more urgent.

LGBT workers often rely on chosen and extended family for personal, medical, and other familial support. As a result, the Council should broaden and standardize the Act's definition of "family member" and "child" to ensure that all LGBT workers and their families are able to fully access D.C.'s family and medical leave protections.

Many LGBT workers rely on "chosen family" for medical and emergency-related care, which the bill's current definition of "family member" does not address. Approximately 64 percent of LGBT adults between the ages of 45 and 64 who were surveyed in a 2010 report said that they have a "chosen family," defined in as a "a group of people to whom you are emotionally close and consider 'family' even though you are not biologically or legally related."^[11] About 53 percent of LGBT adults between the ages of 45 and 64 said that they would depend on close friends in an emergency, compared to 25 percent of the general population.^[12] LGBT-identified older adults in particular must rely on chosen family for care. They are twice as likely as non-LGBT identified older adults to live alone and more than four times as likely to be childless.^[13] Research suggests that gay and bisexual men in particular rely on chosen families for major needs like emergency medical care.^[14]

As a result of having had fewer legal options for partnership historically, many LGBT people are not in the legally recognized relationships that this bills prioritizes in its definition of "family member." Nationally, between 1.1 and 2 million children under the age of 18 have a lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) parent who is not married or is currently cohabitating with a non-legal partner.^[15] Only an estimated 40 percent of LGB adults are either married or in a cohabiting relationship as compared to 60 percent of non-LGB adults, and many cohabitating relationships are not legally recognized. Living in non-legally binding, cohabiting relationships is also a trend in non-LGBT families and homes. Nearly a quarter (24 percent) of never-married young adults ages 25 to 34 are living with a partner who they are not legally connected to^[16] and in D.C., more than 20,570 individuals live with an unmarried partner, with higher numbers among communities of color.^[17]

Finally, many LGBT and non-LGBT communities rely on multi-generational, non-legally recognized family systems for support and childcare, which the bill's current definition of

“family member” would not protect. Recognition of these family structures is particularly vital for protecting communities of color and low-income families. One in five American households with children include nonrelatives or relatives other than the child’s parents or siblings. Among these households, nearly 20 percent are below the federal poverty line and more than 70 percent receive public assistance.^[18] More than 18 percent of Americans (or 57 million people) live in multi-generational family households, and this figure is higher among communities of color. About one in four Latinos/as and African-Americans live in a multi-generational household, and 27 percent of Asian Americans do.^[19] About 72 percent of caregivers provide care for a parent, stepparent, or parent of a partner, and 67 percent of caregivers provide care to someone who is 75 years old or older.^[20] African Americans are more likely to be providing simultaneous care to both an older person and a child under 18, or to be caring for more than one older person at a time.^[21] In D.C., approximately 8,000 children live in a household that is not headed by a mother or father^[22] and about one in five D.C. households include non-immediate relatives and non-legal or biological relatives.^[23] The bill’s current prioritization of legal relationships between partners and families ignores these realities and the vital needs of some of D.C.’s most vulnerable communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to adequately address the needs and realities of LGBT families, the Council should adopt the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)’s definition of child to ensure that all LGBT workers and their families are protected from discrimination and given equal access to protections offered by this bill, regardless of the legal or biological relationship a covered worker has to a child.[24]

The Council should also adopt the federal Office of Personnel Management (OPM)’s definition of “family member” in order to ensure that all LGBT family relationships are fully recognized and protected, including “chosen” and “extended” family members and those who are very closely, but not legally or biologically, related family members. Specifically, the Council should add OPM’s inclusion of “any individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship.”[25]

CONCLUSION

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about this important bill and its potential to serve as a vital protection for LGBT workers and their families, particularly those who are low-income and people of color. I hope you will consider making the suggested amendments, and I am happy to serve as continued resource in the drafting and regulation process. Thank you.

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- [1] Key Features of a Paid Family and Medical Leave Program that Meets the Needs of Working Families. Center for American Progress and National Partnership for Women and Families (December 2014). Available at <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/PaidFamilyLeave-FactSheet.pdf>
- [2] The FMLA defines child (son or daughter), in relevant part, as: “(3) Persons who are ‘in loco parentis’ include those with day-to-day responsibilities to care for and financially support a child, or, in the case of an employee, who had such responsibility for the employee when the employee was a child. A biological or legal relationship is not necessary.” See 29 USC 28.
- [3] See 75 FR 33491 “An individual with any of the following relationships to the employee: 1. Spouse, and parents thereof; 2. Sons and daughters, and spouses thereof; 3. Parents, and spouses thereof; 4. Brothers and sisters, and spouses thereof; 5. Grandparents and grandchildren, and spouses thereof; 6. Domestic partner and parents thereof, including domestic partners of any individual in 2 through 5 of this definition; and 6. Any individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship.” See 75 FR 33491.
- [4] Insurance benefits: Access, participation, and take-up rates, private industry workers, National Compensation Survey. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013). Available at <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2013/ebbl0052.pdf>
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- [9] Jaime M. Grant, Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling. Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey. National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (2011). Available at http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf
- [10] Kellan Baker, Laura E. Durso and Andrew Cray. Moving the Needle: the Impact of the Affordable Care Act on LGBT Communities. Center for American Progress (November 2014). Available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/report/2014/11/17/101575/moving-the-needle/>; The Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People: Building a Foundation for Better Understanding. Institute of Medicine (2011)
- ^[11] Still Out, Still Aging: The MetLife Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Baby Boomers. American Society on Aging and MetLife Mature Market Institute (2010). Available at <https://www.metlife.com/assets/cao/nmi/publications/studies/2010/mmi-still-out-still-aging.pdf>
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- [24] The FMLA defines child (son or daughter), in relevant part, as: "(3) Persons who are 'in loco parentis' include those with day-to-day responsibilities to care for and financially support a child, or, in the case of an employee, who had such responsibility for the employee when the employee was a child. A biological or legal relationship is not necessary." See 29 USC 28.
- [25] See 75 FR 33491 "An individual with any of the following relationships to the employee: 1. Spouse, and parents thereof; 2. Sons and daughters, and spouses thereof; 3. Parents, and spouses thereof; 4. Brothers and sisters, and spouses thereof; 5. Grandparents and grandchildren, and spouses thereof; 6. Domestic partner and parents thereof, including domestic partners of any individual in 2 through 5 of this definition; and 6. Any individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship." See 75 FR 33491.

Dear Members of D.C. Council,

When I was a young girl my mom and dad worked very hard to take care of my six sisters and I. I can remember sick days that went something like this... *my mom would instruct my teenage sisters on how to care for us (the sick kid), and then she would call to let their school know they would be absent for the day (as sick kids), and then she would give an emergency number to my older sister(s) so they could call if anything went terribly wrong in her absence, and then she would go directly to work.* This was because although she was the manager in her department, she knew sick days were limited and with six children she had to learn to ration those sick days.

As I grew, this became the go-to plan when anyone became sick during the work week. Unfortunately, when I was 10 years old my family experienced something that went far beyond the need of a sick day. We needed several sick days, we needed a community of people and we needed some legitimate time to heal. We were facing a tragedy that was devastating and without the proper supports we would fail to regain footing. As we sat in my moms car preparing to travel to my grandmothers house for Thanksgiving loud shots rang out. The aftermath of those shots left my mom and my older sister with many bullet wounds that would leave them both fighting for life in separate ambulances heading to the nearest ER, I was also left with a bullet wound and rode in a separate ambulance to the nearest hospital. When I arrived I sat in an ER room for a while with no one but the medical team until my dad came bursting in the room in a way that I'd never seen before. His face was filled with tears as he held me and said "Lita didn't make it. Lita was my older sister (who probably would have made it had she not jumped in front of my body to shield me from the bullets headed in my direction). From that moment my dad only left my side when it was necessary for him to go to check on my mom. He'd called worked let them know the situation and they gave him a few days to be there with us and support us. It wasn't until I was an adult that I learned my dad lost his job because he'd ran out of sick days being in the hospital at my bedside.

Now, as a mother with a child who is prescribed 9 different daily medications to help alleviate his severe asthma and allergy symptoms, I'm faced with the need (*keep in mind that I'm not saying desire but the need*), to have days to support him and his everyday struggle with coping with such a heart breaking illness. With weeklong hospital stays in intensive care units and other emergency situations that arise we face many obstacles. I have to work with schools, educational professionals, asthma and allergy specialist, doctors and healthcare professionals on ways to better care for my son. Many of these appointments or meetings require taking a few hours, or a day off which means I **have** to negotiate with my employers and companies for some variable of leave and that usually does not result in paid leave time. Not just my employer, but so many businesses have policies in place that prevent them from having to be too flexible to an employee like myself.

Having had many years of experience with how lack of access to paid leave days, impacts the balance of a family I know how important the passing of this bill is to many people. I come from a family of hard working people, and I ask that you consider this bill as an effort to provide support to people like myself, who are not asking for an extra vacation or a hand out, but who are asking for the basic need to support themselves and their family members when the unexpected or expected need arises. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Jeronique Bartley

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**PUBLIC HEARING ON
B21-0415:
UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015**

FEBRUARY 11, 2016

**TESTIMONY OF THE
WASHINGTON LAWYERS' COMMITTEE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND URBAN AFFAIRS**

My name is Christine Tschiderer and I am an Equal Justice Works Fellow at the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs. I am pleased to present the testimony of the Committee in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. Thank you for your leadership in drafting an extraordinary bill, and thank you providing us the opportunity to share our perspectives on the need for this legislation today.

My colleagues and I have been closely monitoring the debate over the cost of this bill, and unfortunately we are not qualified to opine on that topic. However, as the bleakest predictions about the costs of this bill have been accompanied by calls to dispense with any form of paid leave legislation, we would like to take this opportunity to highlight the pressing need for paid family and medical leave, and to point to the provisions of this bill that we believe are the most essential.

For nearly fifty years, the Washington Lawyers' Committee has addressed issues of discrimination and entrenched poverty through pro bono litigation, representing individuals in claims of discrimination related to employment, housing, incarceration, and disability rights. As an Equal Justice Works Fellow, my practice has focused almost exclusively on combatting discrimination against pregnant women and caregivers in the workplace, particularly amongst low-wage, immigrant and non-English proficient workers. I have worked to enforce the protections of the federal and District of Columbia Family and Medical Leave Acts, but I am regularly confronted by the limitations of those laws. Many of the workers who come to us for assistance – including janitors, food service, and retail workers – receive no protection from the FMLA, either because they are employed by small businesses that are exempt from the law or because they work too few hours to be covered, often not by choice. And those fortunate enough to be covered by the law often find it a hollow promise, as they can scarcely afford to take more than a week or two of leave without a paycheck.

Consequently, we believe that a progressive income replacement rate is crucial to ensuring that paid leave is accessible to those in our community who need it most. Under the current proposal, workers earning the minimum wage will be entitled to receive 90% of their weekly wages in benefits from a paid leave insurance fund. These are workers earning approximately \$380 per week – hardly enough to subsist in this city – and who couldn't entertain taking unpaid leave. Even 90% is a bare minimum of affordability for them. Because of this reality, low-wage workers feel the impact of a lack of paid leave most acutely, as they return to work just days after giving birth, straight from a loved one's hospital bed, or before they have fully recovered from a serious illness. We urge you not to implement a one-size-fits-all approach to benefits that would require low-wage workers to collect less than their full pay while on leave.

Second, we urge you not to compromise in extending coverage under the D.C. Family and Medical Leave Act to those who have worked at least 500 hours and 6 months for the same employer. Although the DCFMLA offers only limited protection, those protections – namely, job security and continuation of benefits, including health insurance – are absolutely critical to maintaining a measure of security and stability after welcoming a new child or while weathering a health crisis. In the absence of these protections, workers are entitled to a maximum of 7 days of sick leave under D.C.’s Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Act before they can be terminated. Moreover, limiting the DCFMLA’s protections to those who have worked for the same employer for at least a year ignores the realities faced by workers who must switch jobs for myriad reasons outside of their control, including unexpected layoffs and scheduling inflexibility.

Finally, to those in the business community who contend that 16 weeks of paid leave is “too much” and potentially too disruptive, we urge you not to conflate the creation of a universal paid leave insurance fund with the DCFMLA, which creates the entitlement to up to 32 weeks of family and medical leave in a 24-month period, and which has been the law in the District since 1990. The DCFMLA undoubtedly causes workplace disruptions. We at the Committee understand this, having recently supported our Director of Litigation in taking 12 weeks of paternity leave (the maximum amount of paid leave provided under our own policy) and preparing for the absence of the Director of our Prisoners’ Project, who is expecting her second child in March. But the Council determined several decades ago that this policy was necessary to ensure employees in the District job security during times of significant family and medical obligations, and we wholeheartedly agree.

In any event, the wisdom of that decision is not currently up for debate. What this particular bill proposes to do, 25 years after the passage of the DCFMLA, is to finally enable all employees who are eligible for family or medical leave to *actually take it*. The employers who complain of sudden disruptions to their businesses have been benefitting from the inequitable status quo, in which leave is only available to those who can afford to take extended time off without pay.

Before I conclude, I’d like to add a word about small businesses who, like the Committee, will feel the biggest burden from the absence of a member of their staff. Small employers not covered by the DCFMLA would bear no greater staffing burden under this legislation than they currently do, as this bill does not require them to protect the jobs of employees who take family or medical leave and draw benefits from the fund. However, small employers – many of whom would like to provide paid leave to their employees but cannot afford to, as you’ve heard today – will benefit from the peace of mind of knowing that their employees can receive income during a time of hardship, just as they can from unemployment compensation systems after a layoff. Surely we can agree that this is not an unfair burden simply because those employees not covered by the DCFMLA will now have access to income (if not job security) while they deal with a personal or family crisis.

For each of the reasons I’ve discussed, we urge you to pass this important legislation and continue to make the District of Columbia a wonderful city in which to work, live, and raise and care for our families. Let’s lead on leave.

Thank you.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
February 11, 2016
Submitted to the Committee of the Whole
Testimony of Preston Van Vliet

Hello, my name is Preston Van Vliet, I use he/his/him pronouns, and I am a resident of Ward 5. I am also a staff person with Family Values At Work, one of the supporting coalition partners. My personal story reflects the kinds of diverse families that Family Values At Work advocates for in working with all other workplace leave campaigns.

Thank you for hosting this hearing today. I'm here to support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. I've lived in Brookland for about ten months. I moved here from Michigan to live with my partner, who has lived in Anacostia and Brookland for several years. Like many other LGBTQ people, he came here for a higher quality of life, to live in a place where he could be safe and have opportunities to thrive. I am happy to say his hopes have been fulfilled in many ways.

I am a transgender man who had to hide my gender identity at my job in Michigan. My boss asked me to not come out to our clients, which meant that I had to shave my face, an important part of my gender expression, for over a year after I started testosterone hormone therapy. I knew coming to DC would not only provide safety in employment, but also more affordable access to gender confirming medical procedures that would have cost me twenty thousand dollars in Michigan. For so long, the surgeries that I need were out of my reach. I had to put tremendous emotional energy every day into burying this pain. When I am able to get these procedures, I'll have a life I never thought I could have—where I can feel joy in every part of my body and just finally be able to breathe without aching for the first time. For me, and many transgender people like me, it's only possible to really be myself with the help of these medical interventions.

I will need a lot of help in recovering from these different procedures. My entire biological family is in Michigan, and so how "family" is defined is a huge concern for me. The initial bill actually didn't go far enough—it did not use definitions that would include chosen family members that many trans people rely on, but may not have lived with. The new draft is even worse because it requires legal relationships that my community has been denied recognition of for decades. As it currently stands with the new bill, none of my DC family could use paid leave to help me recover—not even my partner.

Many other trans people move to DC for trans competent services and accessible healthcare like myself, but there are many home-grown trans people in the DC

community as well. Their leadership, specifically the leadership of trans women of color, in fighting for trans inclusion for decades, has made DC one of the best places to live as a trans person in this country. But many trans people, especially trans people of color, as noted in DC Trans Coalition's recently released report, have very low incomes and cannot afford to live on less. They need full wage replacement.

I encourage you to update the definition of family further, so that individuals can turn to the people in their lives that they define as family to take care of them during life-changing, life-affirming, times. I also encourage you to allow for full-wage replacement for the lowest wage earners.

Thank you.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
February 11, 2016
Submitted to the Committee of the Whole
Testimony of Michelle McGrain

Hi, my name is Michelle McGrain, and I have lived in Ward 1 in Mount Pleasant for two and a half years. I am here to support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

I strongly support many provisions of the original bill - especially the 16 weeks of coverage and the 100% progressive paycheck replacement rate - and I would like to see them restored in the final draft. Today I would like to speak specifically about why you must reconsider including federal employees in the program.

I'm a Congressional staffer. There is no required or consistent leave policy across offices. Often, offices don't even have leave policies until the first staffer needs it, and then that becomes the official policy. When planning maternity or paternity leave, it becomes the responsibility of the individual employee to negotiate with their boss for the amount of leave - paid or unpaid - they are even allowed to take. Then each individual tries to cobble together whatever other sick and annual leave they have to try to get as close as they can to the 16 weeks that most people view as essential. For medical leave, when people have no time to plan and no choice but to take time off, they usually end up taking unpaid leave or borrowing from future leave.

While I have not needed long-term leave yet for either medical or family reasons, I know I will. I would like to start a family one day. I could wake up tomorrow morning and need medical leave for myself or for someone in my family. Having a paid family and medical leave insurance system is so important to me that I would be MORE than willing to pay into the system on my own behalf.

I love working in public service. I also love being here in the District of Columbia at the beginning of my career, with seemingly endless professional opportunities. But I want to be able to make my career decisions based on what is best for me professionally, and not based on which job has a leave policy and which boss seems flexible. Nobody should be left to the whims of employers, reliant on their goodwill - I want to have the opportunity to pay into a system that will provide me with the same safety net that it will provide my neighbors and friends.

Please include federal workers in the final bill - if necessary you can allow those who do not want to participate in the program to opt out. But let us choose. Thank you.

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**PUBLIC HEARING ON
B21-0415:
UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015
Testimony of Aaron Litz**

My name is Aaron Litz. I'm a Ward 4 resident and supporter of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. This bill supports DC families and my community.

I work for BUILD, a national nonprofit with a site in DC. We help high school students in the district start their own businesses in order to develop the life skills that they'll need for college and career success. To work with our students is to see the bright future that is possible with the help of legislation like the Universal Paid Leave Act.

My students are resourceful and responsible. Because their parents really need to work all the time, they often take on serious caregiving responsibilities for younger siblings or elderly grandparents. When my students have to step up to support their family in this way, their school attendance and engagement can drop.

This winter, a student came to a mentor session with me after missing days of school to provide family caregiving that allowed her Mom to continue to work--and she knows what it means if Mom can't go to work. I hope I do not have to elaborate for this council what she feels when her empty stomach tells her that Mom needs to earn a paycheck. My student, and her Mom, have earned, one thousand times over, their rights to learn, and provide for family. My student will succeed. She reached out to teachers to make up work; her business team brought her up to speed on the tasks for which she was responsible. I know she will succeed, and she is lucky to have the extra support. but did we have to make it harder for her?

In a city with a graduation rate of only 64%, DC should be jumping at every opportunity to get more students to school more often. The Universal Paid Leave Act helps my students by ensuring that when life challenges happen, their parents can be good caregivers, good employees, and champions of their children's success.

Businesses don't exist just to make money for their owners, but to serve our city's communities with services and products that we want to buy. This is how businesses support community development and growth. Critics of this bill complain that businesses will not be able to survive this progress, but the success of businesses should be an indicator of whether our communities are thriving, not the other way around. The complaints offered by critics have this relationship backwards: they prioritize profitable business over the success of families. This is a flawed perspective, and one my student entrepreneurs know better than to accept. If our families thrive, our businesses and local economy will do so as well.

DC students and families will benefit from the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015 with what I hope will be up to 16 weeks of available leave, and a meaningful progressive pay rate to ensure low wage workers recoup 90% of their paycheck. I support the swift passage of this bill, and anyone who cares about the future of DC should support it too.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
Susanna Murley
February 11, 2016

I would like to thank you for considering this necessary, commonsense bill and allowing me to share my support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. My name is Susanna Murley. I've lived and worked in Washington, D.C., for 11 years and I recently bought a house in the Riggs Park neighborhood of Ward 4. Although I didn't get a chance to vote for you, Councilmember Todd, I'm disappointed you have been waffling, and that you haven't been a champion of this important bill.

When I was six months pregnant, I accepted a position working at a communications firm that contracts to the federal government. It was my dream job and it came with a raise. Unfortunately, it also came with no maternity policy. Instead it had a short-term disability policy that only kicks in after you've been with the company for a year.

So, I worked until the day I went into labor and then took six weeks off—unpaid—while I recovered from giving birth to my beautiful daughter, Lyla. Luckily I didn't have any complications that would've kept me out longer and put my job at risk.

The fact that it was unpaid meant I couldn't financially afford to take more than the minimum my doctor recommended and what my company allowed me to take. It went by really fast and I was back at work before I was able to feel 100% after going through the most painful yet beautiful experience of my life.

I also would've loved to stay at home and provide a better start for my daughter—to get in a better sleep rhythm, get better at breastfeeding, and to really just get to know her better. I left just when she was starting to develop more of a personality, to laugh and see more of the world around her.

In the D.C. job market, promotions and raises happen most often when you change jobs. You're trapped if you feel like you should stay at a company only because they have maternity leave or not take a new position if a new company doesn't have any—or, like in my situation, there is some but it doesn't apply until the end of an arbitrary waiting period.

It's very important that you vote in support of this bill, which would provide family leave benefits to people when they start a new position. Even without job protection for all people who work, at least having access to paid leave is a crucial step. Expanding job

protection to all people who work would be ideal. The original bill's changes to the job protection requirements were a step in this direction. Good job protection is just a reasonable adaptation to the realities of the D.C. job market.

If you want women to advance in their careers and you want to encourage families to stay in the District, then something needs to change. It's not reasonable to wait for a year in a job to be eligible for maternity. It's not right to expect women to pass on career advancement in the interest of making or growing their families. Sometimes your life timeline doesn't match up perfectly with your career timeline, and that should be ok.

I want my daughter, Lyla, to see me taking on professional challenges. I also want her to grow up in this city, where she can experience a diversity of cultures and participate in the ANCs, block meetings and festivals with the backdrop of the nation's most powerful decision makers. She's your future taxpayer and we should give her the best opportunity in life that we can.

Thank you again, for this opportunity to address you. I hope you will pass this bill and support the working families living here in D.C.

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415:
TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015
Testimony of Kelsey Ryland
2/11/16

Hello, thank you council for taking the time to hear from the DC community - its residents and businesses, on why paid family leave would help make the district great. My name is Kelsey Ryland, I am a resident of ward 5, and I am the policy manager at URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity. I will be reading a statement on behalf of Kierra Johnson, the Executive Director of URGE.

“Good evening. My name is Kierra Johnson and I am the Executive Director of URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity, and a resident of Ward 1. I am testifying today to share not only why this legislation is important to my organization, but also why it is important to me as a mother. I have been the Executive Director of URGE, formerly Choice USA, for 9 years and have been a staff member for 16 years. In 2010, I was pregnant with my son Parry. At that point, URGE offered FMLA which was two weeks of paid family leave. Because of my tenure at URGE, I had accrued enough vacation and sick time to take 3 paid months. However, I knew that many employees in my organization would not have the same opportunity to take enough paid leave to be with their new family. When I returned from parental leave, I raised our organization’s paid leave from 2 to 6 weeks of paid leave and an additional 4 weeks of unpaid leave, with an option to use sick and vacation time.

“URGE envisions a world where all people have agency over their own bodies and relationships, and the power, knowledge, and tools to exercise that agency. One of the most important decisions we will make in our lives is the decision on whether to become a parent.

“URGE knows that all people deserve the full range of reproductive health services. URGE believes that reproductive justice means not only access to abortion care, but also supporting people when they decide to become parents. Creating a family should not only be a privilege for those who have salaried jobs with generous benefits. Adequate paid leave is a reproductive justice issue, we must support all people and their choices around pregnancy and parenthood.”

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415:
UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015
February 11, 2015

Submitted to the Committee of the Whole

Testimony of Kirk Wilson
in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

Councilmembers, thank you for your time this evening. Your dedication and commitment to the people of D.C. is evident in all that you do. My name is Kirk Wilson, and I am a proud second grade teacher in Ward 8.

When I first started teaching in August, I knew it would be challenging. There would be long days, sleepless nights, difficult lessons, and various other factors that would impact my job on a daily basis. However, I knew that it would all be worth it when my students made gains both inside and outside of the classroom.

Nearly six months after that first day in the classroom, I am proud of ALL of my students. They grow more capable and empathetic by the day, and I witness the hard work that they and their families have put towards their success.

When we talk about the Universal Paid Leave Act, we tend to only consider the working adults involved. However, as a teacher, I have noticed the toll that financial and medical strains take on our society's most valuable resource: our kids.

One student's mother does not have access to strong employee benefits or a stable personal health insurance plan. When a pregnancy failed, she lacked financial resources to aid in the physical and emotional recovery. Rather than focus on her and her family's healing, this mother could only focus on how to ensure bills were paid and that the essentials would remain. Over time, my student's behavior became more erratic and reading was less enjoyable for her. When we finally learned about what had been going on at home, the truth became painfully obvious: we fail our kids when we fail to support our families that are most in need of assistance.

For the sake of the children of Ward 8, and for all our children, I ask that you pass a bill that will make sure the parent I just described is able to take the time to recover from life's traumas, and spend time with their children. Specifically, that means ensuring a progressive wage replacement rate for our city's neediest families, covering mental health, and expanding the definition of family to honor DC's diversity of experiences. And finally, for the sake of all DC teachers, I ask that you include DC government workers in the final policy.

Thank you.

Testimony in Support of B21-0415: the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
Submitted to the Committee of the Whole
Testimony of Hollande Levinson
2/11/16

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of Council for all your hard work on this important bill.

My name is Hollande Levinson. I am a D.C. worker, and I am testifying in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act.

About 20 years ago I was diagnosed with Crohn's disease, a chronic autoimmune condition. Like most chronic illnesses, I have periods of remission interspersed with flare ups. I had gone 5 years without major problems, but then this past year I had two flare ups. I was out of work eight weeks each time. My employer is wonderful—I definitely won the “boss lottery.” They held my job and responded with compassion. However, the organization is too small to afford paid medical leave, so I had 16 weeks with no income. After the second flare up, we were in bad shape financially. We used up our savings, and my partner had to take a loan on her retirement—and we are the lucky ones. We had savings and retirement, we have family who were also able to help, and I had I still had a job to return to. Nonetheless, I live with constant anxiety. One more bad flare up anytime soon would be financially devastating.

My story is not unique. The CDC reports that about half of all adults have one or more chronic health conditions. One of four adults has two or more chronic health conditions. **That's why an inclusive definition of medical conditions must be part of a bill that is universal in practice, not just in name.**

As a result of the mounting stress I experienced this year, I also developed significant mental health issues, including symptoms similar to PTSD, which I learned from medical professionals is very common. It is unfathomable to me that the bill was revised such that mental health does not qualify for paid leave benefits. How is treatment for my mental health any less “real” than my treatment for Crohn's? We've come a long way in our understanding of mental health as a chronic illness, just like a physical one. **That's why coverage for mental health must be part of a bill that is universal in practice, not just in name.**

I simply can't imagine how hard it is for the many people who have similar health issues but work in low paying jobs. Someone in that position would likely end up homeless and dependent on much more costly government social services. I'm sure it happens all the time. **That's why progressive wage replacement at no less than 90% and the job protections from the original bill must also be part of a bill that is universal in practice, not just in name.**

I am also concerned that the revised bill would not have provided paid leave when I was a primary caregiver to both my grandmother and my father-in-law at the end of their lives. Caring for elderly parents is one of the most pressing issues for my generation and the ones following. **That's why a more inclusive definition of family must be part of a bill that is universal in practice, not just in name.**

I support Universal Paid Family and Medical Leave if the law in practice truly lives up to its name.

Thank you so much.

Universal Paid Leave Act
Public Hearing of February 11, 2016
Testimony of Danielle Paulson, Ward 5

Thank you for taking the time to hear my story today. My name is Danielle Paulson and I live in ward 5. I support the paid leave bill.

I have worked in the restaurant industry for 7 years, 5 of those here in DC. I've worked in wards 1, 2 and 6.

I earned two degrees, but I've chosen to remain in the restaurant industry because of my passion for hospitality. Unfortunately, most employers in this industry don't offer any kind of meaningful benefits to their employees, regardless of their work performance or duration of their employment.

On Friday, November 20th, I spent my night off with friends. Only an hour into our evening, a large intoxicated man accidentally stepped on my foot. I was in so much pain that I had to go home.

I woke up the next day in excruciating pain so I went to urgent care. The physician informed me that my fifth metatarsal was broken, that I would need to be in a cast and use crutches for at least two months, and that immediate follow up with an orthopedic surgeon was required.

When I informed my employer of the situation, they took me off the schedule, which in the industry is akin to being fired. This was devastating because I had little savings to live on while I recovered. But I understood it because I could not bartend while on crutches.

Up until recently, I had saved about \$2,500. However, I was forced to spend it treating a tooth abscess just weeks before. I had been living paycheck to paycheck since then. Now, with no income, I could not afford to see the orthopedic surgeon (not to mention pay my rent, utilities, and daily living expenses). I have been forced to rely on friends and family to keep me afloat, avoid being evicted, and quite literally put food on my table.

After 5 weeks of unemployment, I managed to secure a part-time job earning barely minimum wage. During this time, my friends threw a benefit for me. I am incredibly lucky to have loving and compassionate friends who

stepped up to help me - even though supporting me is not their responsibility. I used the proceeds to help pay my bills and finally see the orthopedic surgeon on January 28th; 10 long weeks after I was injured.

But paying the bills and seeing the doctor shouldn't be a matter of having the right friends or of luck. If the proposed Paid Family Leave Program had been in place already, I would have had the financial support that I needed and could have sought immediate medical care. Instead, I am facing a drawn out recovery time.

To add insult to injury, my mother, who lives in Fairfax County, had to have a hysterectomy while I was on crutches. My father was forced to take time off work to take care of her because I couldn't help. This wouldn't matter if it was just the two of them, but I have two sisters and a brother still in grade school. To know that I couldn't be home when my family needed me the most solely because I couldn't get medical care sooner was maddening and disheartening. Knowing that the Discussion Draft issued this week would exclude my family from the definition of family is even worse.

My story isn't over. I still have about 10-14 weeks of recovery and physical therapy and I am living on part time wages. I ask you, the DC City Council, to support the hardworking residents of DC, and pass a strong bill with an inclusive definition of family and with the broadest coverage possible.

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0414: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

Testimony of Sara Fatell, on behalf of Grassroots Gourmet

Good evening, Council. My name is Sara Fatell I am the owner and executive pastry chef of Grassroots Gourmet in Bloomingdale, and a resident of Ward 5. I'm here tonight to testify in favor of a strong Universal Paid Leave Act. While some in the business community claim this legislation is a burden on their business, I'm here to share my own experience, and how this legislation would positively impact not only me, but my business and my employees.

Personally, this legislation would allow me to start my own family. Without it, my income, particularly as a small business owner, would be greatly impacted by maternity leave. When my partner and I discuss starting a family, and our biggest concern is the ability to stay home with a newborn. We don't want to choose between recovering from birth and bonding with our child and earning a living. I am sure you understand that my profit margin is not very high, and paying myself or an employee while on leave—even though it's the right thing to do—is absolutely not feasible. We are a small operation with tight margins. We simply wouldn't have enough.

As a queer feminist business owner, I believe strongly that we should be creating communities where people are able to take care of themselves and their families—however people define their own family. Please revise the definition of family in the current bill to something more expansive and inclusive.

Without this legislation I simply am not able to offer my staff the paid leave that I believe we all deserve to take care of our families. Yes, there is a cost to replacing an employee on extended leave, particularly when their skill set is not easily duplicated. There will be a cost to my business, both financially and in terms of operations, but that it is a cost worth paying, and a cost that saves me in the long term.

Our communities, our businesses, and our District are stronger when people are able to take care of *all* of the responsibilities in their lives, not just their job. With this

legislation, the District has the opportunity to set the standard and show the country that all businesses—small and big—can participate in making sure that we all have the same access to paid family leave. I believe this is a core value not only of the District, or just my business, but of our country. The District and our local businesses can and should lead on this issue.

I want to thank the Council for taking the time to hear from small business owners and DC residents like myself. I strongly urge the Council to make the right choice and pass a strong bill for all families. Thank you.

Testimony of Rabbi Elizabeth Richman, Jews United for Justice

February 11, 2016

Submitted to the Committee of the Whole in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

Good evening. My name is Rabbi Elizabeth Richman. I serve as the Rabbi in Residence and Program Director of Jews United for Justice, an organization that counts thousands of DC area Jews in its community.

עולם . כל המאבד נפש אחת מעלה הכתוב כאילו איבד עולם . The Mishna, the earliest code of Jewish law, teaches that when someone saves a single life, it is as though they saved an entire world. This bill truly is about saving life, which we call *pikuach nefesh* – not just the life of those who are vulnerable or ill, but also the lives of people who care for them.

My rabbinic colleagues and I provide pastoral care to tens of thousands of local people. When I asked one of them about the Paid Family Leave bill, he looked at me and said, “Not a day goes by that I don’t speak with someone in anguish over trying to care for an aging parent or a sick child while trying to make ends meet and keep a job.” The other rabbis in the room nodded and agreed. As rabbis we can listen and comfort. We cannot, however, change their fundamental human predicaments. And yet, while legislation can’t cure cancer or ease a painful death, you, our elected leaders, do have the power to make these crises more bearable.

My neighbor in Ward 4, Megan, has a father in Philadelphia who has been in and out of the hospital for months. Several times it looked like he wasn’t going to make it. When he was first hospitalized Megan had a three year old son and was pregnant, with minimal paid family leave. She wound up frantically depleting the vacation and sick days she was trying to cobble together for maternity leave by traveling to and from Philly.

At birth, Megan’s baby was diagnosed with both a rare genetic disorder and a debilitating form of epilepsy that require hundreds of thousands of dollars in medical care. Paid family leave would help relieve this family’s emotional and financial distress while they are squeezed between caring for an ailing father and a very sick little baby.

But, under the current bill, Megan couldn’t even take leave to care for her father. The 5th of the Bible’s 10 commandments is “*Kabed et avicha v’et imecha*,” - honor your father and your mother. Lesser known is Judaism’s teaching that the 5th commandment also applies to siblings. Children must be able to care for their parents, and siblings, grandparents, and grandchildren must be able to care for each other. Caring for our families is a universal moral teaching.

Most of the stories I and my colleagues hear are from middle class people with professional jobs, like Megan. If my mostly middle class community is struggling, how can DC’s lower-income communities even survive?

We need to make it possible for low-income families to actually take this leave, by not lowering the replacement rate. We need paid family leave to cover all family relationships and all serious medical conditions. And we need to cover *everyone* we can.

Chairman Mendelson, I deeply appreciate your having brought us to this serious discussion of how to make paid leave work for everyone. May all of us here tonight, and the tens of thousands of people who care but couldn't be here, work together to make this a law that preserves the lives and dignity of all people.

Joanna Blotner, Campaign Manager, DC Paid Family Leave Coalition

Testimony to Support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

February 11, 2016

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the more than 140 Paid Family Leave coalition members and the 80% of District residents who support the Universal Paid Leave Act. I will summarize our response to the discussion print, and we will provide a more in-depth analysis soon. We know there were only hard choices to make, and we deeply appreciate your holding central the needs of DC's lowest-income working people.

Our coalition sees the current draft as providing a solid benefit for the people and circumstances it covers – but it needs to cover a wider range of people and circumstances.

First, we are very pleased that the bill preserves **universal coverage for DC's private sector**. Exempting small businesses, niche industries, or companies already providing leave would increase the program's cost, both to individual businesses and to the city. We are also glad to see that **self-employed people remain covered**.

However, all DC residents, regardless of where they work, should have access to the program. 40% of working District residents are Federal employees, reverse commuters, or DC government workers, and this revision prohibits them a crucial benefit. We want to work with you to figure out their inclusion.

Likewise, the Council should view **twelve weeks of leave as a bare minimum** to meet the very real health and child development needs of our workers and residents. If the CFO determines that revenue will not yet be sufficient to cover 16 weeks at the outset, we urge you to add language that would trigger automatic increases when revenue is adequate. This should be done *before* the automatic tax reductions below 1%.

The new 90% pay replacement rate preserves the necessary progressive pay structure but we see this as a painful cut for our lowest-earning residents, and we strenuously object to it being lowered further.

Another key issue for working families is the requirement that they entirely **spend down accrued sick leave**. People should have the option to use sick leave during the waiting period, but it should not be required. It makes no sense for people returning to work after a serious health issue to have zero sick days available for urgent needs at a time they are vulnerable.

We also urge the council to **restore job protection at six months of service**. Part-time workers and those in low-wage, high-turnover industries would rarely qualify at 12 months. When you're living paycheck to paycheck, you can't afford to have no job to come back to.

Finally, we need to see workable **definitions of family and medical conditions covered**.

Coverage for mental health must be restored. Illnesses like clinical depression and PTSD are real and debilitating, and no employer wants someone in a mental health crisis forced to come in to work.

More broadly, the revised language defining **medical eligibility** is overly prescriptive. Medical professionals need the flexibility to make decisions about when someone needs leave.

And, finally, as someone who had to leave my father nearly paralyzed in the hospital in order to work, I wish that pain on no one. I can't imagine that the Council meant to exclude care for parents, siblings, grandparents, or adult children. We must **define family** in a way that ensures no one ever has to walk out on their loved ones at the scariest time in their lives.

The Paid Family Leave Coalition thanks you for your thoughtful review of the issues and looks forward to working with you on a final bill that meets all our families' needs.

Chairman Mendelson and Members of the Committee of Whole

My name is Ramesh Butani and I am President of HRGM CORP, located in Anacostia since 1978. We have 35 full time employees. Our employees are precious assets of the company and such we treat them with respect and give them great benefits and great salaries. We sincerely believe that it is employees who make money for the company. I am sure that's case with most employers in this competitive market place.

Now I am concerned about this new family leave bill, which puts my employees half in my charge and half under DC control. This is not a sustainable model because there is no such thing as a little pregnant. Either we are in charge or the City is in charge. The reason 90% of the businesses in this country do not join the unions is same. Businesses don't feel in charge!

DC's CFO has testified that this bill will collect more taxes than DC's current income tax on businesses which is 9 ½%. So this means DC will charge more than 20% in taxes on its job creators. The next time we go to Las Vegas to recruit businesses for the city we will find that no one wants to dance with us. Our shirt says we charge 20% in state taxes on the front and reads DC will be your co-employer on the back.

Quite a few businesses will try and find novel ways to avoid DC residency of their businesses while still maintaining the contracting benefits. In some cases

this bill will make criminals out of good people. The swishing sound you will hear if this bill passes is the sound of companies moving out of this town.

I did some cursory research to find out how this bill made it to these Chambers. Someone over at Democratic National Committee asked the City if it would like to be a test lab for this Family leave policy. Why do we want to be a test lab for the National Democratic Party?? We didn't observe large cries or demonstrations from workers in this City saying this was needed – so why are we overstepping?? I do not understand the hurry to bet “All In” at this casino of an idea. How about if we do our own mock up. Pick 100 different businesses and pay them to test it for 5 years. Let us see what the consequences are before we go “All In”. It's unfortunate that even when the Democrats had all the power, they did not grant DC part of the state tax for people who work in DC and live elsewhere.....None of these National parties are friends of this town. We are wasting our love on them. Maybe if we play hard to get we might get more loving....

Chairman held 2 hearings and realized that the bill is not perfect and he made substantial changes. That's just a result of 2 hearings. Imagine what will happen when it lands on the street. This will completely overwhelm the DC DOES Agency. By Federal statue only DOES is authorized to collect this kind of tax. Imagine managing upto 400,000 employees. DC will need army of workers

to tackle the complexities of this policy. There will be hundreds of lawsuit. If one employee takes 12 weeks we may have to compensate another one who did not take the leave. There are 100,000 different businesses and trust me each one will have different consequences. If it is not broke why fix it. Famous saying by General Collin Powell "If you break it you will own it". Keep that in mind before you take an action that's reaction has not been examined at great length. The Business Community is already upset over this bill. Even the Newspapers are screaming about this bill. Please spare us the nightmares of causing the City to lose thousands of businesses and thousands of employees, creating the life from 70's and 80's to rise again!! I'm racking my brain to understand what Council's motivation is to pass a law that all the businesses in the City are opposed to?

Testimony of David Wasserstein
in favor of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
February 11, 2016
Submitted to the Committee of the Whole

My name is David Wasserstein, and I am a 23-year-old Ward 1 resident. I greatly appreciate this opportunity to speak in front of the council today to support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

I moved to DC at the end of August to serve as a corps member of a Jewish-American service organization called Avodah. Through this program and my work as a Legal Clinic Assistant at the non-profit organization, Bread for the City, I've witnessed stark inequality in this city. How have we allowed a system that denies a son the right to care for his mother? How have we allowed a mother or father working two jobs to be unable to care for their child? Do we not have an obligation to ensure that all hard-working people, who sustain the American economy, are afforded basic protections and rights?

Aside from tugging on what it means to be American, the Universal Paid Leave Act resonates with me in a deeply personal way. My mom has placed her family's well-being above her own to care for my sister and me.

Unfortunately, this past year has taken a huge physical and emotional toll on her, after her mother, my grandmother, became seriously ill. My mom has driven the three hours back and forth to my grandparents' house many times to care for her parents, helping out with morning showers, many doctors' appointments, frayed nerves, or even simply Sunday dinners. All of this is on top of her 9-5 job as an administrative nurse. She is fortunate to receive a family leave package at work so that she can take the necessary time off from her job. Without it, she would most certainly have to quit.

But for the many working people who do not have access to these workplace policies, quitting is not an option. These people, instead, face an impossible choice between caring for beloved family members and earning the paycheck they depend on.

When I first learned of the Paid Family Leave legislation in DC I immediately thought of my family. When the day comes that my parents need my care, I want to be there for them the way my parents have always been there for me. It is absolutely imperative that we allow sons, daughters, and relatives to care for their loved ones with 16 weeks of compensated time. For that reason, I am especially concerned about the narrow definition of *family* within the new draft bill. Please rewrite the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015 to include parents, siblings, grandparents, and adult children - and please give your support to a strong program for all families. Thank you.

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**PUBLIC HEARING ON
B21-0415:
UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015**

FEBRUARY 11, 2016

Testimony of Jane Hayashi

My name is Jane Hayashi and I live in Ward 5. I'm here to support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

In 2014, I flew home on Christmas Eve to spend the holiday with my family. On that same day, my dad went to the emergency room. The doctor told us that he'd had a stroke. He would need to go to a hospital three hours away for more tests. For the next several days, we stayed in the hotel next to that hospital, living out of backpacks and hoping my dad's condition wouldn't get worse. Eventually, the doctors did let us take him home, but it took months for him to recover.

I spent nearly two weeks away from D.C., and one of my dad's doctors came in on his vacation. I'd started my current job in August of that year, so all I had saved up were three vacation days and three sick days. I used all of them, but it didn't feel like enough.

It would have been very helpful to my family if I had been able to afford to stay home and help my dad recover. But as a federal worker who takes a bus to Maryland every morning, I would be excluded from the revised bill. I am also surprised and troubled by the narrow definition of family members in the bill. Seemingly obvious relationships like me taking care of my own father would be excluded. The point of family medical leave is to be able to care for family.

I support a Universal Paid Leave Act that includes a common sense definition of family. so next time my parents need me, I can be there for them.

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415:
UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015**

Testimony of Willie Lucas, Jr.

Good evening. My name is Willie Lucas Jr. and I'm a resident of Ward 5. I've worked at Howard University as an electrician for 39 years. Last year, I was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's, Mettlet Cell Lymphoma. In fact, around this time last year, I was going through my third round of an eight month chemotherapy treatment. I went through a procedure called "stem cell extraction." After that I flew back to Washington, DC from Chicago's Cancer Treatment Centers of America for dental work - upper and lower deep scaling - to make sure that I didn't have any infections. After being cleared by my oncologist, I flew back out to Chicago, and I had another procedure called a "stem cell transplant," the same procedure that Maryland Governor Larry Hogan had.

I've been unable to work since the diagnosis. But I thank God for having a union so I have access to paid leave and health insurance. If it weren't for that, I wouldn't be alive today to tell this story. I would've had to choose between death or leaving a financial debt that could never be paid off. I would choose to die rather than impose that hardship on my family.

I tell you this story to show that some people are not as fortunate I am. I consider myself blessed, but if I could help someone along the way, that's something I want to do. Everyone knows somebody that doesn't have leave. It is so very important that you have access to paid leave from your job so that you can take care of a situation such as mine that may occur. I beg you to please consider this - it could be you, it could be your family. So, my elected Councilmembers of the District of Columbia, I come to you as humbly as I know how to ask: Please pass the Universal Paid Leave Act. Passing this bill, you can save a lot of families a lot of money and heartbreak. Thank you for your time.



TESTIMONY OF HANNAH KANE
Worker Justice Organizer
Many Languages One Voice
UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT

Committee of the Whole
February 11, 2016

Good evening, Chairman Mendelson and all the Councilmembers here this evening.

My name is Hannah Kane and I am a worker justice organizer with Many Languages One Voice, a non-profit organization that houses the DC Language Access Coalition, the Student Multiethnic Action Research Team, and more recently, the Workers' Committee.

MLOV believes that low-income immigrant communities have a rightful place here in the District.

MLOV also believes that the passage of any progressive legislation must be coupled by mindful monitoring and engagement led by impacted communities.

We want to ensure that DC's immigrant communities are leading the charge to create a better, healthier, and more just workplace for all working people in the District.

Today, MLOV stands in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. You have also heard and received written testimony from our members. Many more of our members wished to be here to declare their support as well, but as we speak they are serving DC diners in restaurants, cleaning our office buildings, and ringing up customers in our stores. From their written testimonies, here is some of what they would have said today:

From Anor Ortega, whose husband works for the federal government and would not be covered by the discussion draft of this bill: "I want my husband to fully experience the joy of being a parent. I believe it is crucial for the development of the little one to experience love and attention from both parents. Right now, we can't afford to have a child, because we both know that we

can't take sufficient time off work. Something has to change so people who work or live in this city can truly enjoy the most important time of their lives."

From Bruno Avila, who is currently bussing tables in our District's restaurants: "Employees who don't receive their paycheck because of an illness risk aggravating their physical ailment and suffer emotionally, and as well as economically, and it also affects the most important nucleus of our society, the family. This is why taking action and passing this paid family and medical leave law is just."

From Jhonny Castillo, who is currently cleaning our schools: "My father is 80 years old and is unable to take care of himself alone, his illness requires total repose. I have to help him take his medication, change his clothes, help him when his illness gets worse, take him to the hospital, and maintain close contact with him both in the hospital and at home." Jhonny would no longer be covered by the discussion draft of this bill to care for his aging father.

These real-life experiences from hard-working District residents and workers show that the bill as amended by this Committee will not suffice in supporting our communities.

- Parents, siblings, grandparents, and adult children are an inherent part of the families that we care for when we request paid family leave. A person should not have to choose between caring for their dying mother or father and their job.
- Federal workers, reverse commuters, and DC government employees should not be denied an opportunity to participate, and should be allowed to decide to opt out for themselves.
- Though the DC Council is tasked with passing this legislation, it cannot be tasked with determining which conditions require workers to take paid medical leave. Doctors should make crucial medical decisions with their patients - so unless there any of the DC Councilmembers have a secret medical degree, you should keep to your legislative post.
- Job protection is essential for workers in high turnover industries, like restaurants and retail. Twelve months is too long to wait for job protection – few servers and dishwashers will ever qualify! We are diametrically opposed to any wait longer than six months.
- Chairman Mendelson, you co-introduced the Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Act in 2013. I know that you care that working people have access to paid sick leave so they don't have to choose between their job and their health. **But by forcing someone to spend down all of their paid sick leave before accessing this fund, you are telling a new mother who takes paid family leave when her child is born that she must make that very choice when she gets the flu six months down the road.** Chairman Mendelson, as you yourself said in 2013 following the DC auditor's report on business noncompliance with the original Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Act, "It is in nobody's best interest when workers must work sick, because they are not provided sick leave."

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015

Testimony in Support of Paid Family Leave
From Rev. Robert C. Keithan, Resident of Ward 5
February 11, 2016

Good evening. My name is Rob Keithan, and I am grateful for the opportunity to testify tonight. As a DC resident of more than 20 years currently living in Ward 5, an ordained minister affiliated with All Souls Church Unitarian, and a new father with no paid family leave, I urge the Council to pass the strongest possible paid family leave bill.

After reviewing our finances and our priorities, my wife and I determined that we could both stay home with our baby for the first month. Our plan went out the window when our daughter was born 7 weeks premature, weighing only 3 pounds 12 ounces. Ironically, that was the day we were scheduled to attend the first session of our childbirth education class.

Instead of a comfortable first month at home with our baby, we spent the next 30 days visiting little Eleanor in the NICU at least once and usually twice a day. My wife's employer and colleagues were supportive and flexible enough that she could take off, but I had to keep working amidst the stress and concern for our tiny new baby. Many of the other parents we met in the NICU had to continue working as well--they simply couldn't afford not to. It's a choice no parent should be forced to make and it shouldn't depend on being lucky to work for an understanding boss.

Offering compassion and support to those in need is a central tenet of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and many other religious traditions. It's a strong value for many non-religious people as well, because most people understand that helping others in challenging periods like birth, illness, and dying is simply the right thing to do if you're a decent human being.

The United States likes to think of itself as a leader among nations, and many politicians are quick to identify themselves as supporting family values. But on this issue the United States is sorely and shamefully behind the curve. Among the 41 developed economies, we are the only nation that does not require paid family leave, and we mandate the shortest period of unpaid leave at 12 weeks. Given this, I'm proud that the District of Columbia might lead the United States in doing what's right—and long overdue. The DC proposal appropriately ensures that low-income workers benefit the most, while still covering others—like my wife and me—who are economically secure yet have no paid leave.

With this legislation, DC has the opportunity to be a moral leader and role model for the nation in what it actually means to value families. Again, I urge the Council to pass the strongest possible paid family leave bill. Thank you.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
February 11, 2016
Submitted to the Committee of the Whole
Testimony of Adam Graubart

My name is Adam Graubart and I'm a student at George Washington University. I'm here to support a strong, inclusive paid family and medical leave policy for all people who live and work in DC.

When I was thirteen years old, my father was hit by a car when he went for a morning run. He spent two weeks in a hospital and a rehabilitation facility. During that period, his company was able to provide him time to recuperate as well as 8 weeks of 80% pay for short-term medical leave. This meant my father could recover from his injuries without devastating our family's finances. I testify before you because I do not believe my family's experience should be reserved for a privileged few. Paid family and medical leave are essential components to the District's long-term success.

According to its mission statement, George Washington University, as an institution, strives to "further human well being," "build upon a foundation of integrity," and "improve the quality of life in metropolitan Washington DC." As a member of this community, I am endorsing paid leave based on these principles. The bill that passes needs to be *universal*, including a high progressive wage replacement rate, so that it can benefit all of this city's residents and employees.

I understand that some members of the business community have voiced concerns about this legislation. However, as you heard from another student earlier this evening, this bill encourages long-term economic growth, and will help strengthen GW, one of the District's largest employers.

Hundreds of GW students have signed a petition endorsing this legislation. I hope you will hear our voices. As the representatives of the Foggy Bottom and Mount Vernon campuses, we encourage Councilmembers Evans (Ward 2), Cheb (Ward 3), and At-Large Councilmembers to support this policy, and stand for economic growth, gender and racial equality, and public health in the District of Columbia.

Thank you.

Hearing on "Bill 21-415, Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015"
Committee of the Whole
February 11, 2016
Thomas Marr, owner/operator of Pete's New Haven Style Apizza

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Thomas Marr, and I am one of the owner/operators of Pete's New Haven Style Apizza. Pete's has been in operation in DC and the metro area since April 2008. In the past 8 years, we have grown from a small, single-unit operation employing 15 people to a 4-unit operation with about 175 employees.

I am here to talk about the proposed Universal Paid Leave Act, and its impact on small businesses like ours. In the past 8 years, increases in wholesale food prices, minimum wage, Sick and Safe Leave Act, Affordable Care Act, commuter transit benefits, payroll service fees and administration costs associated with managing these new laws have all impacted and greatly reduced profits. Restaurants are some of the least profitable businesses due to budget-conscious consumers with limited dollars to spend on dining out which limits the prices we can charge based on what the market will bear. All the while, increases in rent, wages, taxes and fees, as well as food prices continuing to rise, are making profits miniscule.

We have been able to use the small amount of money we have made to grow our business and create 160 jobs. I hear all the time how small businesses are the backbone of our economy, but it seems government continues to add more regulations and laws increasing the cost of running our business and places the costs of these benefits on to us. If small businesses are relied upon for job growth and keeping our economy growing, then how can that be possible when we are limiting our means of doing so by reducing profits more and more every year?

When Pete's opened for business, minimum wage in DC was \$7.55 per hour, yet we paid our employees a minimum of \$9 per hour. Currently minimum wage in DC is \$10.50 per hour, and it will rise again to \$11.50 per hour on July 1st. In the same amount of time, Pete's has only had one minimal price increase, which barely paid for the food price increases, so we have had to absorb these costs out of already diminishing profits.

With the time limited to me, I can't discuss every cost that has been passed on to small businesses like ours, but there have been many. The Universal Paid Leave Act will be another, and it won't be minimal. At our current size, a 1% payroll fee will be more than \$25,000 per year, not including the cost of either employing someone or using a service to administer it. Currently, a service to administer the Transit Benefits will cost \$3.50 per employee per month and it would be fair to expect administering the Universal Paid Leave to be similar or even greater.

The added cost of the Universal Paid Leave Act threatens to virtually wipe out all profit. At a minimum, we would have to consider raising prices which have consequences as well. Raising prices would result in lost revenue due to people reducing the amount of times they frequent us and some would stop buying all together. Lost revenue means we would have to reduce our employee size, hours or both resulting in lost jobs as well as reducing benefits we already offer (free employee meals, paid vacation and growth opportunities to name a few). Furthermore, lost revenue, or worse closing restaurants, would also mean less sales taxes resulting in unintended consequence for governments.

In summary, these added costs would very likely limit our ability to grow and create jobs or possibly even contract our business causing us to down size and/or eliminate jobs and/or benefits. Small businesses cannot pay for providing and administering the addition of Universal Paid Leave Act and still be the backbone of our economy through job creation and growth.

Council of the District of Columbia
Committee on of the Whole
Testimony in support of Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
Statement of Jeremiah Lowery

January 15th, 2016

Chairman Mendelson and Councilmembers, good evening. I am Jeremiah Lowery, a Ward 4 Resident, and I am testifying in favor of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

Let me start by thanking you, Chairman Mendelson, for moving the bill forward and having this hearing. This evening I want to speak briefly about my personal and professional reasons for supporting this bill.

A few years ago my mother had a liver infection and she was hospitalized for 3 months, and then needed at least another month to recover at home. Luckily her company offered paid leave and she was able to return to work after her recovery. Without this program, she would have had to leave her job and would have been on the brink of homelessness. My mother's story is just like that of many other D.C. residents, except most don't have access to a strong paid leave program. Every D.C. resident should be afforded the same opportunity as my mother and they should not have to choose between their health or staying on a job to keep food in their mouths or avoiding homelessness.

On a professional level I was the Research and Policy Coordinator at Restaurant Opportunities Center D.C. from 2013-2015, where I organized food service workers to fight for paid sick days, equal pay, and better working conditions. I heard the stories of hundreds of food service workers in D.C. - stories that included having to choose between caring for a child with a serious illness or staying on the job, or having to choose to stay in DC, where it has become unaffordable to raise a family, or move to another state that offers better benefits. Chairman Mendelson, we have the power to keep families in D.C. - let's make sure they never have to make the decision of choosing between care for a child or a job.

In conclusion, while I appreciate the 12 weeks this bill provides, I also ask that you do even better for people with an illness like my mom's who need at least 16 weeks of leave. One solution is to add the option of raising the benefit to 16 weeks of leave as the fund becomes more solvent over time. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

Camille Harris

February 11, 2016

My name is Camille Harris and I'm an organizer with the DC Paid Family Leave Campaign. I work mainly east of the river in low-income communities, where many hard-working people make little more than minimum wage at part-time jobs. I've heard many stories from working people who strongly support the Universal Paid Leave Act, but cannot be at this hearing because they are at their jobs. Today, I'd like to share two stories that illustrate just how profoundly paid family and medical leave impacts the lives of these hardworking people.

Alberta Hart works part-time at the Brentwood Road Giant in Northeast. She told me she can't afford to take any time off, for any reason. She says:

Last year I was outside and fell and I'm not a young lady so I had to take time off to heal from the injury. I didn't bother requesting any leave from my job because I knew they wouldn't have the money to cover me. The doctors recommended that I take three months off to heal, but I couldn't even afford one, but I had to take care of my injuries so that they didn't get worse. I ended up taking about two months of unpaid leave from my job and having to request help from friends and loved ones with bills. I wasn't taking a vacation, I just wanted to feel better and my whole body was hurting. If I had 12 weeks of paid leave, I would have been able to take the full time needed for healing from my injury and I wouldn't be still feeling the effects of it today.

Norvell Bennett has also been a dedicated employee at the Brentwood Road Giant for four years. He told me:

Sometimes I wish that my job would realize that we workers are people and life happens to us just as much as it happens to the next person. A couple of months ago I didn't get to spend as much time with my dying brother as I wanted to. My brother was suffering from an illness, and back in November of 2015, he started spiraling downwards. When I spoke to my supervisors about what was going on, they seemed to have no care in the world about my desire to be with my brother. Because of his illness my brother got his leg amputated to the hip. This surgery caused the spiral and he really needed me to be there to care for him. My job gave me one day off to go take care of and spend time with my brother while he was still alive. On December 27, 2015, my brother passed away and I wasn't there to hold his hand. I was working. After my brother died I got only two days for bereavement. If DC had a full 12 weeks of Paid Family Leave, I would have been able to spend that last two months by my brother's side.

Nobody, no matter where they live or how much money they earn, should have to choose between their jobs and their loved ones, or between a paycheck and their own health. And we need to make sure we have a common sense definition of family that would qualify people like Norvell to take time with and care for their siblings (or their parents or their auntie who raised them...), particularly at the end of life. Everybody who lives or works in DC deserves access to 16 weeks of paid family and medical leave, with a progressive wage replacement rate that allows this policy to reach those who need it most.

Thank you for listening to these stories.

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
PUBLIC HEARING ON BILL 21-415, UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015**

**TESTIMONY OF EMILY HECHT-MCGOWAN, INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
FAMILY EQUALITY COUNCIL**

**Thursday, February 11, 2016
4:00 p.m., Council Chambers, John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the Council's Universal Paid Leave Bill. My name is Emily Hecht-McGowan and I currently serve as the Interim Executive Director for the Family Equality Council, headquartered here in Washington, DC. Family Equality Council is a national organization working on behalf of the more than 3 million lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents and their 6 million children across the United States – thousands of whom are raising children in the District of Columbia today. We work to ensure full social and legal equality for LGBT parents and their children by securing inclusion in legislation, policies, and practices impacting families.

I first want to commend the Council for the tremendous amount of work that has been put into this bill. Only 13 percent of workers in the United States have access to paid family leave through their employers, and fewer than 40 percent have access to personal medical leave through employer-provided short-term disability insurance. We are long overdue for paid family leave in the District of Columbia and I believe there are good provisions in this bill that provide an excellent foundation on which to move this conversation forward.

That being said, I have significant concerns with some of the changes reflected in the current version of the bill, released just three days ago.

One of Family Equality Council's primary functions is to ensure that all families – regardless of their construction – are recognized, respected and protected under the law. For years, Washington, DC and the DC Council more specifically, have been wonderful partners in crafting and passing laws that recognize the diversity of all families. Today's family no longer conforms to the rigid stereotype of two married parents raising their biological children. We are a nation of blended and multi-generational families, adoptive and foster families, families headed by single parents, divorced parents and unmarried parents. Some of us have families connected through blood ties and some are families of choice.

Washington, DC has the highest concentration of LGBT people in the country at 10 percent of the population¹. As many of you well know, up until very recently, LGBT people had to find alternatives to building and protecting our families because the laws excluded us. The DC Council has long been a partner in working with our community to ensure LGBT-headed families were not rendered invisible by exclusionary language and narrow definitions. DC has, for decades, set the standard for what family definitions and family laws should look like. The current definition of family in the Universal Paid Leave Bill sets that work back decades.

The narrow definition of family in the current version of this bill is not only detrimental to the LGBT community, it will also leave unprotected thousands of additional families living and working in Washington, DC. Under this current definition of family – an unmarried partner who lives with and provides day-to-day care and support for a child would be unable to take paid family leave to care for that child should the child become ill or injured; the spouse of a wounded veteran would be unable to step in for their permanently disabled spouse to care for their ill in-laws. Under the current definition of family, a member of the ever growing “sandwich generation” would be unable to take leave to care for an elderly, terminally ill parent. And under the current version of this bill, I would be unable to take leave to care for my adult special-needs brother who suffers from colon cancer and who has no spouse and no children to care for him.

To force workers to choose between caring for their families and their much-needed paychecks is unconscionable. The purpose of this bill is provide workers with the ability to care for loved ones when they become ill or injured without having to worry about losing wages or being fired. But paid family leave is not just good for workers, it’s also good for business. In jurisdictions that have passed and implemented paid family leave laws, businesses have found that these laws improve worker retention, which save employers money through reduced turnover costs, increase worker productivity, improve employee loyalty and morale and allow smaller businesses to compete better with larger businesses. But these laws are successful only if they provide workers with the ability to take care of their entire family, not just a small subset of family members deemed worthy enough for protection. We must ensure that we provide support and protection to workers throughout the arc of their lives, not just when they welcome a new baby into their family.

The District of Columbia has long been the standard-bearer in terms of recognizing families of all constructions, but to narrow the definition of family in this way is counter-intuitive to the work that’s been accomplished by the DC Council over the last several decades. While Family Equality Council strongly supports the passage of a comprehensive and inclusive Universal Paid Leave Bill that covers a broad and diverse cross-section of working families, we are unable to support the bill with its current definition of family. Thank you.

¹See:http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2013/02/16/lesbian_and_gay_population_by_state_washington_ranks_number_one_in_gallup.html

Testimony in support of Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

Submitted to Committee of the Whole

February 11, 2016

Testimony of Kimberly Mitchell, Ward 7 Resident

Good evening. My name is Kimberly Mitchell. I live in Ward 7 and I'm a UFCW Local 400 member.

When I was pregnant with my child, I was working as a manager at Dress Barn, a job I held for 8 years. I had 6 weeks maternity leave plus my vacation that I had saved up. I had also picked up other part time jobs. When I had my baby, I stayed home for 12 weeks and had the money to do so - but it was at a cost. The day before I had my child I worked my day job and my night job standing and was so tired. I believe as a result my child was born 3 weeks premature and now has issues in school, and also has internal issues because of it.

I talk to workers all over the city about what their rights are and what we're trying to accomplish here in the city and give them hope. Many of the workers I talk with, and I, have worked in the District for many years and switched jobs a few times. But I talk to so many people who can't get the time off because they are only part time and have no benefits, or they are full time and have not worked at their job long enough. If they don't come to work they will be fired, so they do what they can with what they have. So thank you for protecting universal coverage for all District employers. This provision makes this program work for many more DC residents, especially those who work in low-wage jobs.

I hope you will restore the proposed job protection provisions. These will help protect many of the people who are very hard workers.

I find that we, as a society, should try to do the right thing up front instead of trying to pick up the pieces when all hell breaks loose. And we know that it will, because life happens! So I urge you today to support this bill so that we can all share a slice of the pie and take care of the people we love. Thank you.



Bill: Universal Paid Leave Act of 2016
Committee: Committee of the Whole
Position: Support
Date: February 11, 2016
Name: Matthew Hanson, Campaigns Director
Organization: DC Working Families
Contact: Mhanson@workingfamilies.org or 202-725-4769

I would like to thank the Council for allowing me testify today in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act. My name is Matthew Hanson and I live in Ward Six with my wife. Most of my family lives there, too. I am the Campaigns Director for DC Working Families, an independent political organization launched by a grassroots coalition of community and labor organizations, activists, and voters who want to see a DC that works for everyone, not just those at the top. We believe this legislation is an important step in that direction.

Last May, my partner and I decided to get married, and we want to eventually start a family here. DC is a wonderful place to live and we love everything it has to offer. At the same time, it is alarming how increasingly difficult it is for families to make ends meet. Without legislation like the Universal Paid Leave Act, more and more families will be forced to leave the city they call home because they will have to choose between caring for a loved one and making ends meet.

We should make it easier to raise or take care of family here. That is why it is vital that you pass not any old paid leave act, but a good, strong one. The definition of family in the committee draft must be significantly broadened to include parents, siblings, adult children, and other close, important relationships.

On a more personal note, I know paid leave can make all of the difference. When my twin brother and I were born, my mother, a single mom at the time, worked a job that left us near the federal poverty level. Even though she was paid very little, her employers did provide paid leave so that she was able to stay home and take care of us in our first months when no one else was able to. She was lucky but not everyone is - and luck shouldn't be the determining factor here. Good policy will ensure that all families can access this critical program.

For all of these reasons and more, I, like 80 percent of District residents, support the Universal Paid Leave Act. I urge this committee to support the swift passage of this legislation.

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Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
February 11, 2016
Submitted to the Committee of the Whole
Testimony of Linda Benesch

Good evening Councilmembers and hard-working Council staff. My name is Linda Benesch and I live in Ward 3. I'm honored to be here speaking in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. I've been a volunteer leader with the DC Paid Family Leave campaign for over a year.

The summer after I graduated from college, I was living with my aunt in Ward 2. She's the most active, vibrant person I know. Despite constantly traveling around the world for work, she finds time for many hobbies in DC, including building a green roof on the top of her garage.

One day I walked outside to find her lying on the concrete in her backyard, bleeding. She had fallen off of the garage and hit her head. Her friend called an ambulance and the three of us went to the emergency room.

I learned a lot in the next few weeks. I learned that when someone is in the hospital, they need an advocate to ensure that the busy doctors and nurses give them proper treatment and address their concerns. I learned that overcrowded hospitals release patients long before they are physically or mentally able to be on their own. And I learned that I was the one who would have to step up as my aunt's primary advocate and caretaker.

My aunt's friends, my dad, and other family members offered support but could not stay for long periods of time because they had jobs they needed to return to. At the time, I had a job that did not offer any paid leave but did allow me to take unpaid time off.

I was fortunate to be in a financial place where I could take several weeks off to care for her. But far too many DC residents are not so fortunate. We need to end this cruel inequality. Financial concerns should not stop you from being there for the ones you love when they need your help with crucial care.

One way in which my experience did resemble that of many people in DC, and around the country, is that I was living with, and ended up providing care for, a relative outside of my immediate family. That's why I was disappointed to find out that the newest version of the bill does not cover caring for family members beyond partners and kids - not even for adult children to provide care for their parents. I very much hope that you will restore the bill's original broad definition of family to reflect the modern day reality for millions of Americans.

My aunt's injury taught me that anyone, not matter how healthy, can unexpectedly need support. DC workers should not have to wait any longer for the basic human right, enjoyed by the citizens of nearly every other country in the world, to take time away from work when they or their family members face a life changing event or health crisis. I urge you to pass the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015, and include a broad definition of family. Thank you.

TESTIMONY OF STUART CAMERON

I am Stuart Cameron at Appleton St NW where I have been living for 30 years. Mainly I am here on behalf of my wife, who is a current federal employee working in a clerical job. She is a bit shy so she asked me to testify instead. of her. We are both opposed to the Bill 21-415 or the DC Paid Family Leave Bill. In our opinion, it unfairly targets federal employees living in the City with a special tax between .5 and 1% of their gross annual wages to help fund the program.

This tax would be a terrible imposition on federal employees particularly on those in the lower income categories as is my wife. She would have to pay .8% of her gross wage earnings. By doing so, she would be losing almost the entire net amount of her federal raise for 2016.

Bear in mind, this is only the second time in recent years that federal employees like my wife have even gotten a raise and only token ones at that. Also, it is unlikely that the great majority of federal employees including my wife would benefit from the District's paid daily leave program. Federal employees get leave benefits from the government as part of their wages.

I would imagine that there are many thousands of federal employees around my wife's wage category. If they are single, this tax could have a real impact on them. I am sure many already cannot afford to live on their own in the city. In a way by levying this special tax on their gross income, it would be like taking money from the lower class and giving to a still more impoverished class right beneath them.

My suggestion would be to adopt Council Chairmans Mendelson's "discussion" draft alternative to the current paid family leave bill. I have heard that his measure would exempt federal employees from the paid family leave program altogether.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak before you.

As a local and small business in the District of Columbia and the surrounding area, we have been supportive in the past of measures to improve the lives and work experiences of our staff and the local community in general. Much of this endeavor does not require mandate and when it is so required, it is often done with little or no concern for our business, our true staff concerns and the affect such regulations can have on our economy and very livelihood, especially when compared to our neighbors in Maryland and particularly Virginia.

As a fair minded and concerned employer we pay our staff a fair wage which has gone from a minimum entry level wage to something referred to as a living wage - minimum wage has never in our understanding been established to support one entirely and certainly not a family, but to get one's entry into the workforce and have it be inexpensive enough for us as an employer to engage in on the job training to get this employee above that base and more successful in their role and thus of more value to us moving forward. This approach has been all but lost with the gross increase base wages. Now we are unable to bring in excess staff and teach them roles as our labor dollars have increased exponentially as well as associated taxes and insurance costs triggered by payroll dollars.

As a compassionate and understanding employer we allow the call in of staff up to four hours before a shift for illness and inability to arrive to work, and to the moment in case of emergency as excused absence. We support individual needs for family care, counseling and schooling with very flexible scheduling. We offer vacation and leave benefits based on a thirty hour workweek as well as management of work travel benefits for pre-tax deductions. By producing schedules on a weekly basis we allow employees the most flexible option to adjust their availability based on family and personal needs as they occur.

As a retail business in DC we have been inundated with added costs and legislative requirements that seem never ending and often poorly communicated. The Ball Park fee has been unending even as the team and its owners have no need for this assistance, and the bonds for this stadium have already been paid. Ban the box, though good legislation is simply enforced by one's individual's ability to shakedown a potential employer for a simple mistake while using the DC government as one's co-conspirator.

The pending legislation for predictive scheduling is another example of public policy and government establishing unnecessary and burdensome requirements without understanding of our business. Restaurant operations are dependent on a multitude of factors: tourism and business travel, local events, weather and even the news to understand the service level and staffing needs. Our staff members are aware of these needs and as noted previously, often prefer the ability to change their desires commiserate with our schedule creation. Employees desiring such - often have set schedules within our framework already.

The proposed Universal Paid Leave Amendment Act further weighs heavily on an ever shrinking bottom line and increasing taxes and fees while facing flat and often declining sales in such a tough economic time. This is not simply a tax problem but also one of appropriately staffing our operations. This measure as we understand it drastically increases and even encourages people to NOT work. This is another example of well intended interests being applied in a fashion that is sure to be abused, unfunded and in direct contrast to good business.

During recent hearings there was comment about the health of the restaurant business. While we are in a vibrant and wonderful city, some of this is illusionary. We have increased the numbers of restaurants, but not the numbers of guests, and not revenues per operation. Our payroll costs, health insurance costs, local taxes and fees have exploded. While it may seem that operations are not closing at an alarming rate, you will see less lease renewals, more moves to less expensive neighboring locales and a more difficult time overall as investors and lenders find this market less appealing.

At minimum, we will be forced to pass along future mandates to our guests; this comes as we already have one of the highest tax rates in the country, and the highest in this region.

Respectfully,

Mr. Boo Kim
Director of Operations
Acadiana/ District Commons/ Burger, Tap & Shake/ Penn Commons

**Testimony of Mike Visser, Owner of Flying Fish Coffee and Tea
In Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act
February 11, 2016
DC City Council, Committee of the Whole**

Good evening and thank you for inviting me to testify at this hearing. My name is Michael Visser and I am the owner of Flying Fish Coffee and Tea in Mt. Pleasant, Ward 1. I am also a resident of Ward 4. I have come tonight to speak in favor of the Paid Family Leave Act, as a member of the food service industry.

Just a few background numbers to start. The average annual income in the District is \$78,580. Let that sink in for a second because the median annual income for a food service worker, a group that makes up roughly 8% of the entire workforce, is \$19,692, and less if you have the audacity to take a vacation day.

The Universal Paid Leave Act is good, period. It benefits everyone, but most importantly it benefits workers who generally have no benefits or savings. There has been some talk of exempting small businesses from the bill but in my opinion that misses the point entirely. Frankly speaking, as a society we have chosen to ignore that we keep the prices of food and other services artificially low by deflating the wages of the people who do the work, as evidenced by the fact that a minimum wage worker in the District makes less than \$20,000 per year while the average one bedroom apartment costs more than \$21,000 per year to rent.

I have always paid more than minimum wage at my coffee shop even though it is often labeled as "too expensive." And even if I could afford it, no private insurer will write a short term disability policy for a part time hourly worker. The Universal Paid Leave Act will benefit everyone, and it puts the responsibility on everyone, not just those of us with a conscience. With that kind of level playing field I can both compete in the marketplace, and sleep at night knowing none of my employees are one accident away from homelessness.

You have heard that the Universal Paid Leave Act is "bad for business." What that really means is it will force some larger business owners to cut into their own profits in order to support their workforce. Seattle and Los Angeles have shown the courage to pass difficult wage laws that benefit their lowest paid workers, and last time I checked neither city has imploded. I also know that some businesses have threatened to leave the city if this bill is passed, and to them I say good riddance. This is a bill that will benefit hundreds of thousands of people for a relatively low burden, and if you can't see the value in that, the District is probably better off without you.

I have watched the council in recent years make deals with large companies to try and bring in jobs, only to see those companies leave town when a better deal is offered somewhere else. All the while, local restaurants and services continue to employ District residents without the tax breaks and incentives offered to those large companies. We are embedded in the fabric of our neighborhoods in a way no office ever will be. In the service industry we don't get paid vacation days, we don't get federal holidays, we spend all day on our feet, and we do it for next to nothing. Some of us do it because it is our passion, but many of us do it because we have not been given equal opportunity, and are not able to go

to college or get a better job. It is those low wage workers that the council should seek to help first, not the chamber of commerce, and not industry executives who already have benefits and comfortable salaries.

I am here tonight to ask the council to have the guts to live up to campaign promises and put the most needy first, by passing the Universal Paid Leave Act.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

February 11, 2016

Testimony of Hannah Weilbacher, Ward 4

Good evening members of the council and council staff. My name is Hannah Weilbacher and I'm here to support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. As a community organizer, my job and my passion is to get to know the DC community and learn about how access to paid leave would make a difference in people's lives. Xiomara and Jeannette couldn't be here tonight because they are working the late shifts, so I'm here to share their stories.

Xiomara's story:

"My name is Xiomara Gavidia and I work at the Safeway on Columbia Rd. I'm a part time worker and need as many hours as I can get to take care of my husband and me. I'm 19 weeks pregnant and afraid of losing my job because of the new baby. I'm really excited to have a baby, but there are a few reservations that I have. Who is going to be at home with my baby to feed and care for them? My baby will need a mother in the first few months to take care of their every need. I can't afford to take care of my baby if I'm not working, but I can't work if I'm looking to take care of my baby. I can't afford a babysitter. My husband works and has no leave, and neither do I. If I had Paid Leave I would have the opportunity to take on the full time job of being a new parent while also providing diapers, food, and clothing for my new baby. I also would be able to take the time that I need to heal from my body going through the trauma of childbirth."

I'd also like to share Jeannette's story.

"My name is Jeannette Mitchell and I was born and raised in Ward 8. I work at the Safeway on Columbia Rd. in the bakery, deli and as a cashier. I recently I had my second child and it has been difficult trying to juggle my responsibilities at home and my responsibilities on the job.

"My son was born premature and I had a very complicated pregnancy. Today my son is 9 months old and only weighs 14 pounds and is still wearing clothes and diapers for 3 month olds. As a result of the difficult pregnancy, my son and I have to spend a lot of time in the doctor's office to make sure that we are both doing better. The doctors are concerned that he's not growing and I'm concerned, too.

"My mother lost her job because she had to be home to take care of my little brother who was suffering from severe asthma. My mom had to take a lot of time

off to take care of us. As a result, I had to drop out of school to become the breadwinner for my family.

“The experience that my mom had taking care of my baby brother proves to me that my employers don't care about me, just about the business. If my mom had 16 weeks of paid leave to take care of my brother when he was sick maybe she would still have a job today; or maybe if she had the time to heal when she was going through her own personal illness I would have been able to finish school. I know that my baby would have benefited from having me home for 16 weeks to take him to his appointments and make sure he's eating enough to grow. Circumstances aside, I also want to bond with my kids and need more than a few weeks to do that. With these 16 weeks my family and I would be in a very different place today.”

For these women, for me, and for the community I hope you support a paid leave program with at least 12 weeks of leave and the progressive wage replacement rate that actually works for people who work. Thank you so much.

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

February 11, 2016

Testimony of Marcel Estévez, Ward 3

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony. My name is Marcel Estévez and I'm here to testify in support of paid family leave legislation.

I grew up in Puerto Rico, in an immigrant family from South America. I am a naturalized US citizen and have spent the last 15 years in the continental United States, in Baltimore, Philadelphia and since 2014 I've made Washington my home. I currently live in Ward 3.

My partner, Matt, and I have been together for two years, and we chose to make DC our home, even though we work in Maryland and Virginia, respectively. As reverse commuters, we support this piece of legislation, with the understanding that we would chip in as individuals to the fund. Please cover us, too! Instead of just cutting us out of the program, please give our families the **choice** to opt out if they don't want this high quality paid leave program. We understand there is a cost to the program, and we are happy to pay it--and we know many others in our position who feel the same way. The peace of mind that comes with paid family and medical leave is worth every penny; this is an investment in all of our future financial, physical, and emotional wellbeing.

Matt suffers from two chronic illnesses, and thankfully they are currently not debilitating, and I hope that they will never be. Even so, there have been instances when he has had flare ups or simply needed support to go to the doctor's office, and I have taken time off from work to be there for him. As of now I've taken my own personal sick days, here and there. If, G-d forbid, he fell seriously ill, I worry not only that he might lose his job, but also that I would not be able to afford to leave my own job for an extended period of time to take care of him. Having legislation in place that would support us in such an eventuality is a necessary safety net that we are prepared to contribute to, not only for our family but for others that will surely need it. Thank you.

**Hearing on “Bill 21-415, Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015”
Committee of the Whole
February 11, 2016
Ruth Gresser, Owner of Pizzeria Paradiso and Veloce**

Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you tonight.

I am Ruth Gresser, owner of Pizzeria Paradiso and Veloce. I own 4 restaurants in DC and VA and employ approximately 150 full and part time staff.

First, let me say that I am part of the choir. I firmly support a system of employment and compensation that is fair and generous to both employer and employee – paid family and medical leave should be part of that system

I started my business in 1991 and within a couple of years began offering health insurance coverage to my employees. With varying levels of coverage, I have offered sick pay, vacation pay, short and long term disability coverage and retirement benefits long before any of this was mandated by government or considered by my industry.

I am also the President of Women Chefs and Restaurateurs, a 23 year old organization with the mission of advancing women across the culinary industry. While I am not here representing WCR, many believe that women will not be fully represented in this industry until there is a more level field in terms of family and medical leave for women due to the child bearing and caretaking role women usually hold.

However, as a business person, I also know that the system of compensation must also recognize the growing number of legislated taxes, fees, and requirements placed on the employer and the overall impact of the costs of recent legislation. An additional 1% tax on my business to fund this legislation will add a \$30,000 expense to my business each year. To be sure this is much more than I have historically paid to help my employees through a medical issue, so this will add to my business' expenses rather than reduce them. The question of how my business will absorb this added expense is yet to be determined, but as we all know money doesn't just drop out of the sky.

In addition, nothing happens in a vacuum. The Affordable Care Act, the transit subsidy and increases to minimum wage all impact the businesses that animate this city. DC cannot afford to over burden its businesses. I am also concerned about the administration of the system and the question of whether the system will be fully funded.

I have been in the position of being able to offer substantial coverage to my employees. I have done so without legislation. If this legislation moves forward it must take into account the reality of close profit margins, rising costs and the limited resources of businesses. I caution the Council to be reasonable and to recognize the cost to employers as well as the benefit to employees as the details of this bill are discussed and determined.

Thank you for your time and concern for the citizens of Washington, DC.



many languages
one voice

TESTIMONY OF JHONNY CASTILLO

Public Witness

Member, Many Languages One Voice

UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT

Committee of the Whole

February 11, 2016

Good afternoon, present Councilmembers and the general public. My name is Jhonny Castillo, a D.C. Ward 1 resident for 16 years, of Ecuadorian nationality. I have witnessed how in my community there are grave health problems, and these can be cured with better benefits and treatment at work to fight an illness.

We go through difficult situations with our elderly, who suffer an infinite number of illnesses that result from growing old, and they need a partner or a child to be close to them to assist them at any given moment.

I experience the difficulty with my father that he is 80 years old and is unable to take care of himself alone, his illness requires total repose. I have to help him take his medication, change his clothes, help him when his illness gets worse, take him to the hospital, and maintain close contact with him both in the hospital and at home.

The money that he receives from social security doesn't cover his daily needs. I've found myself needing to rearrange my expenses to make his life more comfortable, because what he gets doesn't cover his expenses. Every month I give him some amount of money to fill his pantry.

We suffer so many abuses from the companies that have cleaning and maintenance contracts in buildings in the DC area. The majority of supervisors deny us permission to take off of work for medical problems, demanding that we give them doctor's notes to pay us for the sick day, and in many cases the illnesses are such that we will recover with rest and some over the counter medicine.

This bill, the Universal Paid Leave Act, is very beneficial for the community, because we would have more help to be able to remain close to a person with an illness that needs love and understanding from their child or a close family member.

TESTIMONIO DE JHONNY CASTILLO
Testigo Público
Miembro, Mil Idiomas Una Voz
ACTA DE AUSENCIA PAGADA UNIVERSAL

Comité del Consejo Municipal Completo
11 febrero, 2016

Muy buenas tardes, autoridades presentes y público en general, mi nombre es jhonny castillo, residente de Washington por 16 años, soy de nacionalidad ecuatoriana. He sido testigo de cómo en las comunidades existen graves problemas de salud, sin que estas puedan hacer mayormente un tratamiento más beneficioso para poder combatir una enfermedad.

Atravesamos una situación con las personas de la tercera edad, quienes sufren por tener sin número de enfermedades por ser mayores, y son las que más necesitan de un pariente o un hijo que esté siempre más cerca de ellos, para poderlos asistir en el momento dado.

Precisamente yo atravieso esa clase de dificultad con mi padre que él ya ha cumplido los 80 años y es imposible cuidarse solo, su enfermedad requiere de reposo absoluto, tomar su medicación, cambiarle de ropa, asistirle cuando empeora su enfermedad, trasladarlo al hospital y mantener un contacto más cercano en el hospital como en su hogar.

El dinero que recibe por su jubilación no cumple con las necesidades diarias, me he visto en obligado a organizar mis gastos para de esta manera hacerlo un poco más cómoda su vida, porque con ese misero dinero que él recibe no puede costearse sus gastos, mensualmente colaboro con una cantidad de dinero para aumentar su canasta de comestibles.

Tenemos tantos abusos en las compañías que mantienen contratos con los edificios que tienen en las áreas de DC. En donde la mayoría de supervisores nos niegan un permiso para ausentarnos por problemas médicos, aduciendo que tienen que traer una receta médica, para hacerlo válido el permiso por enfermedad, y en muchos de los casos son enfermedades que solamente se puede recuperar con reposo y una pastilla.

El proyecto de ley que se está presentando es muy beneficioso ya que tendríamos ayuda muy buena para permanecer más cerca de una persona con enfermedad y necesitan el cariño y comprensión de un hijo o familiar cercano.

Jennifer Muns
February 11, 2016
PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015
In support of Paid Family Leave

Testimony for D.C. Council: How the lack of Paid Family Leave has impacted me

Hi, my name is Jennifer Muns and I'm a volunteer for the D.C. Paid Family Leave campaign through Jews United for Justice. I currently reside in the Van Ness area in Ward 3, and I have lived in D.C. for over six years. I am testifying in favor of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

I've been very fortunate to have parents who have always been able to support me emotionally, physically, and financially, and I am thankful for this everyday.

Unfortunately, my relationship with my father was not always as close as I would have liked throughout my childhood. He worked long hours and travelled frequently. I think this somewhat poor childhood relationship began as soon as I was born. The company my Dad worked for did not give him any paid parental leave whatsoever. In fact, he had to use his vacation days to be with my Mom in the hospital for the five days that she was there. What started off as a normal birth turned into a cesarean section, and my mom was very sick and weak after delivery. Nevertheless, just a few days after she left the hospital, my dad had to return to work, leaving my mom on her own to care for me in Michigan, where she had just moved a few months earlier and where she hardly knew anyone.

This bill enables your partner or spouse to be at your side so that the two of you can learn the ins and outs of parenthood together. It's about enabling both parents—whether that be a mother and a father, two fathers, or two mothers—to bond with their new child. It's about being present for those priceless moments in your child's life that will never be repeated. If my Dad was given access to paid parental leave, we would have had more of a chance to bond after I was born, and that likely would have led to us having a better, closer relationship while I was growing up. In addition, my mom wouldn't have had to face being a new parent largely on her own.

The amount of paid leave that this bill offers is not radical or over-the-top, as some have claimed. In fact, the United States is woefully far behind on this issue, as the only country other than Papua New Guinea not to have some form of legally protected, paid time off for working people.

Paid family leave is something that would benefit everyone in the District of Columbia. It's time for the nation's capital to lead on leave and pass this important legislation. Thank you.

Testimony of Ariel Wilson Cetrone

February 11, 2016

PUBLIC HEARING ON B21-0415: UNIVERSAL PAID LEAVE ACT OF 2015

Good Evening. My name is Ariel Cetrone. I am a resident of Ward 6 and the proud mother of a four-month-old son. I am testifying in favor of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

In March of 2013 I was hired by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, a DC government agency, to serve as their Arts Education Program Associate. Though my contract dictated the same full-time hours and responsibilities as the agency's full-time employees, the Commission classified me as a contractor and denied me benefits such as health insurance, sick time, unemployment insurance and maternity leave. A third of the agency's employees were classified this way.

In February of 2015, I notified agency leadership of my pregnancy and inquired about utilizing the same paid maternity leave benefits as my colleagues. I was denied paid leave due to my contractor status. I believed I was misclassified as a contractor and filed a complaint with the Department of Labor. The day after agency leadership found out about my complaint, I was terminated due to what they called a contract issue. I was eight months pregnant. This joyful time turned to one of fear. In addition to losing my fight for paid leave, I had also lost the three paychecks I was expecting before the birth of my son.

All city government employees should have access to the paid leave in this bill. I support the Universal Paid Leave Act because had it existed when I was still employed, I would have been able to apply for paid leave through a mechanism in the act that allows misclassified employees to claim funds. Furthermore, had I actually been self-employed, I could have paid into the fund annually to ensure paid leave. I urge the City Council to support both measures within the act and also encourage you to investigate rampant employee misclassification. All District residents deserve equal opportunity to survive in this, the most expensive US region to raise a family.

Thank you.