



February 14, 2024

The Honorable Arthur J. Corvese  
Chair, House Labor Committee  
Rhode Island House of Representatives  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**SUBJECT: Support for House Bill 7171**

Dear Chair Corvese and Members of the Committee:

**The American Heart Association would like to voice support for House Bill 7171 by Representative Giraldo, and we thank the committee for the opportunity to submit testimony.** This important legislation would enhance benefits under the Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI) Program.

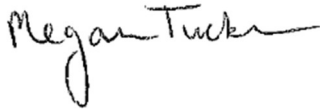
The American Heart Association is the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke. Heart disease is the No. 1 killer worldwide, and stroke ranks second globally. Even when those conditions don't result in death, they cause disability and diminish quality of life. We want to see a world free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke. Our mission is to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives.

House Bill 7171 would enhance the TCI Program in the following ways:

- 1) Increase the maximum caregiver benefit from 6 to 12 weeks.** This bill will help align Rhode Island with other states that have Paid Family Leave (PFL) programs. A vast majority of those states offer 12 weeks of benefits for bonding and care giving purposes, while Rhode Island offers the lowest amount of paid family leave at 6 weeks. Nursing parents who have access to paid leave are more likely to breastfeed, which has been shown to improve the heart health of the parent and baby.<sup>i</sup> Women who take paid leave after the birth of a child are more likely to reenter the workforce within a year of the child's birth.<sup>ii</sup> In addition, workers who can take paid time off work to care for themselves or a family member may be more productive.<sup>iii</sup>
- 2) Expand the definition of family to include siblings, grandchildren, and care recipients.** The American Heart Association is committed to equity and believes that PFL policies should have a broad and inclusive definition of family that encompasses and protects the diversity of modern families. The addition of "care recipient" helps achieve that goal.
- 3) Increase the weekly dependent's allowances from \$10 to \$20, or 7% of benefit rate, whichever is greater.** Rhode Island has the lowest wage replacement in the U.S. Low wage workers cannot afford to utilize this program as they are barely making ends meet with 100% of their wages. This will moderately assist working families.

Please support House Bill 7171 to ensure Rhode Island employees have access to TCI benefits that provide sufficient paid time off to manage significant family life events and needs, such as caring for a family member with a serious health condition, or to bond with a new child after birth, adoption, or placement in foster care. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Megan Tucker  
Government Relations Director/Senior Region Lead  
(401) 824-4818  
[megan.tucker@heart.org](mailto:megan.tucker@heart.org)

---

<sup>i</sup> Huang R, Yang M. Paid maternity leave and breastfeeding practice before and after California's implementation of the nation's first paid leave program. *Econ Hum Bio.* 2015; 16:45-59. doi: 10.1016/j.ehb.2013.12.009.

Tschiderer L, Seekircher L, Kunutsor SK, Peters SAE, O'Keeffe LM, Willeit P. Breastfeeding is associated with a reduced maternal cardiovascular risk: systematic review and meta-analysis involving data from 8 studies and 1,192 700 parous women. *J Am Heart Assoc.* 2022; 11(2):e022746. doi: 10.1161/JAHA.121.022746.

Miliku K, Moraes TJ, Becker AB, Mandhane PJ, Sears MR, Turvey SE, et al. Breastfeeding in the first days of life is associated with lower blood pressure at 3 years of age. *J Am Heart Assoc.* 2021; 10(15):e019067. doi: 10.1161/JAHA.120.019067.

<sup>ii</sup> Houser L and Vartanian TP. Pay matters: The positive economic impacts of paid family leave for families, businesses and the public: Rutgers Center for Women and Work; 2012.

<sup>iii</sup> Appelbaum E and Milkman R. Leaves that pay: Employer and worker experiences with paid family leave in California. 2011. Available at: <https://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/paid-family-leave-1-2011.pdf>.

The Council of Economic Advisors; Executive Office of the President of the United States. The economics of paid and unpaid leave. June 2014. Available at: [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/leave\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/leave_report_final.pdf).