

February 13, 2024

Dear Chairman Corvese and members of the House Labor Committee:

My name is Aryana Huskey, and I am a resident of Warwick, RI. I write to you today **in support of House Bill 7171**, which will improve Temporary Caregivers Insurance (TCI) for workers in Rhode Island. This bill will do several things: expand the number of available weeks a year from six to 12; expand the ‘family’ definition to include siblings, grandchildren, and care recipients; and increase the weekly dependents’ allowance from \$10 to \$20.

I support House Bill 7171 because:

**1. The need for caregivers in RI is not going away.**

- According to the RI Department of Labor and Training’s recent [2030 Occupational Projections](#), when accounting for jobs that must be filled when existing workers transfer to other occupations or exit the labor force, there will be an estimated **23,271 openings** for Personal Care and Service Occupations from 2020 to 2030. As we continue to look forward, this demand will be further emphasized with the rapid expansion of the older adult population, contrasted with an anticipated relatively static population of prime working-age adults. [By 2030, it is estimated that 1 in 4 Rhode Islanders will be 65 or older](#). And, a [2023 study by PHI National](#) states that the current ratio of adults aged 18 to 64 to adults age 85 and older is *30 to 1*, but is projected to drop to just *12 to 1* by 2060. All of this means that there will be fewer potential paid and unpaid caregivers available to support older adults in our state.
- While TCI is currently utilized primarily for bonding with a newborn (~75%), it is likely that as the benefit expands, along with an increased need for caregiving, more working RIsers will use it to support caring for an aging loved one.
- When factoring in unpaid caregiving, the projected unmet demand is likely even greater than research suggests. Per [AARP’s 2023 report on Valuing the Unvaluable](#), in 2021 there were 121,000 individual Rhode Islanders providing 113 million hours of **unpaid caregiving**, estimated at a total economic value of **\$2.1 Billion dollars**.

**2. Supporting working caregivers has a positive economic impact.**

- [Harvard Business School’s recent 2019 report on Managing the Future of Work](#) cites that 32% of employees voluntarily left at least one job because of an inability to balance work and caregiving responsibilities... with **50% of employees aged 26-35 having already left a job due to caregiving responsibilities**.
- Considering the need for regional competitiveness in a tight labor market, expanding the features of TCI to be on par with neighboring states is a logical choice for the State of Rhode Island.
  - **Both Connecticut and Massachusetts offer 12 paid weeks of TCI.**
  - CT and MA also offer more competitive wage replacement rates of at least 80%, compared to RI at 60%.
- Per [Metlife’s 2021 Employee Benefit Trends Study](#), Paid Family Leave (TCI) is considered to be a “must-have” benefit by 77% of employees nationally and is considered the second most important benefit after medical insurance.

The proposed expansions to TCI will promote meaningful social & economic participation of the residents of RI, and I implore you to vote in favor of bill H7171.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Aryana Huskey, MSW, LCSW

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