

Dear Chairman Corvese and Members of the House Labor Committee,

I write to you to express my **strong support for House Bill 7171**, which will improve Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI) for workers in Rhode Island.

By expanding the family definition to include siblings, grandchildren, and care recipients, TCI will become much more inclusive to families across Rhode Island. Many households and families are multigenerational or otherwise “non-traditional,” and everyone should have access to TCI benefits when caring for a loved one, regardless of whether they happen to be a parent or spouse.

Additionally, by expanding the number of weeks people can utilize the benefit into which they have paid, true caregiving becomes much more realistic.

RI Department of Labor and Training data show that a majority of people – though not all – who utilize TCI benefits are parents welcoming a new baby to the family and using this time to bond with the newborn. Medical research is [abundantly clear](#) in that newborns who have longer bonding times with parents experience better socioemotional, behavioral, temperamental, and developmental outcomes, with [some evidence also suggesting positive effects](#) on cognitive, language, and motor development. Additionally, sufficient bonding time benefits mothers and birthing parents; [rates of maternal depression are decreased](#) when paid family leave is freely available.

Conversely, returning to work before mothers and birthing parents have fully recovered or established infant bonding negatively affects the health of all involved. The [American Academy of Pediatrics has applauded policy](#) that provides 12 weeks of paid family leave, which will be accomplished by the passage of H-7171.

Whether they’re a new parent or not, no one should have to return to work before they have been able to help a family member fully recover from an illness, injury, or medical event. Rhode Island also has an aging population, which will render aging-in-place and family caregiving even more crucial in the years to come. Now is the time to act to make TCI – and thereby, caregiving – more realistic and feasible for families across our state.

Expanding the number of weeks available to Rhode Islanders from 6 to 12 will also boost the state’s economy, as benefits such as paid leave are among top considerations for professionals seeking a new job. States with poorer paid leave policies are far less attractive to people considering relocating for their career, and paid family leave is an area in which Rhode Island has fallen far behind. Massachusetts and Connecticut both provide up to 12 weeks of paid leave and have more inclusive family definitions. In order for Rhode Island to be a place where people want to live, and for our families and aging population to be appropriately and sufficiently cared for, our TCI laws urgently need an upgrade.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Becka Carroll, MPA

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