

Parent Data

February 12, 2024

Dear Chairman Corvese and Members of the House Labor Committee,

My name is Emily Oster, and I am a resident of Providence, a professor of economics at Brown University, and the CEO of ParentData. I've written four books about pregnancy and parenting, with an emphasis on translating scientific research. My expertise is in analyzing data to separate fact from myth and correlation from causation.

I am writing to express **my full support for House Bill 7171**, which proposes critical improvements to Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI) for workers in Rhode Island.

There is a growing body of evidence confirming that infants do better when their mothers have access to maternity leave. Research on the introduction of the Family and Medical Leave Act in the U.S. reveals lowered premature birth rates and infant mortality. There are also studies that show that introducing a four-month paid maternity leave for moms led to higher education levels and higher wages for their children in adulthood. These long-term effects were largest for the children of moms who were less well-off financially.

Paid parental leave should be a policy priority. Unfortunately, Rhode Island has fallen far behind in recognizing its short- and long-term importance. House Bill 7171 would expand the number of weeks from 6 to 12, putting our state in line with Massachusetts and Connecticut as well as the scientific evidence on its benefits for infants and parents.

There is no research showing that 6 weeks is adequate time for the physical recovery, caregiving, and bonding that take place after birth. At that stage, many women are still struggling to establish breastfeeding and may still be experiencing heavy bleeding. Over 50% of women experience a pregnancy complication, such as

diabetes, preeclampsia, or serious maternal morbidity, that can lengthen recovery time. I have spoken with thousands of new parents in my work, and it's rare to meet someone who is ready to return to work at 6 weeks.

I strongly urge you, based on both human decency and the scientific evidence, to vote in favor of this bill and expand the current paid leave program in Rhode Island.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Oster". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Emily Oster
Providence, RI