

February 13, 2024

Dear Chairperson Corvese and members of the House Labor Committee:

I am Kristen Lariviere and I live in Cumberland. I am a fellow of The Women's Policy Institute and a mother, daughter, granddaughter, sister, aunt and more so, a caregiver who is native born and raised Rhode Island resident.

I write to you today to support House Bill H7171 which will improve our current Temporary Caregivers Insurance (TCI) of 6 weeks to 12 weeks and better define "caregiver" for Rhode Island workers.

I support House Bill H7171 because I previously used TCI for 4 weeks in 2020 when my son, Isaiah, was born.

I experienced a traumatic birth which caused me to be temporarily disabled and I was not able to care for my son in ways a new mother could if they experienced a healthy birth. I was not able to pick up my son on my own and needed someone to support me to pick him up and hand him to me. During this time, I was not able to walk freely, needing to use a walker following an extensive health care plan from my OBGYN and Physical Therapists. While I was grateful to be able to use TCI for 4 weeks to bond with my son, it was not enough time for me to bond and care for my son postpartum.

As a woman: our bodies are created to carry and create life over the span of 40 weeks for us to give birth and expect our bodies to "bounce back" to return to work and find alternative care for our newborn in 6 weeks' time. How is this okay?

I urge you to vote in favor of bill H7171. I urge you to think about the well-being of women who experience life as a mother to a newborn. I urge you to think about the caregivers who care for the new mothers during postpartum, when they need the most support. I urge you to think about the well-being of the newborn's first year of life and the crucial impact on brain development when bonding with their mother. It is imperative that we expand TCI from 6 weeks to 12 weeks to ensure Rhode Islanders can be cared for during times of need.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Kristen Lariviere, M.Ed.
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