

February 13, 2023

The Honorable Arthur Corvese
Chairman, House Labor Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Corvese and the House Committee on Labor Affairs,

I am compelled to write today to support bill number H7171, An Act Related to Labor Relations- Temporary Disability Insurance- General Provisions.

This bill is a step forward in paid leave for all, positively impacting all Rhode Islanders' lives. In the face of aging families and an increasingly strained healthcare system, it is incumbent upon our legislature to take a decisive step forward by improving Temporary Caregiver Insurance.

Let me share a personal narrative that underscores the critical need for such provisions. Several years ago, my mother suffered a devastating fall, breaking both of her wrists. Following surgery on both wrists, she found herself incapable of tending to basic needs—feeding, using the toilet, bathing, and more—requiring constant supervision for her well-being. Despite the seriousness of her situation, she was ineligible for nursing home care beyond the initial week.

Faced with this dire circumstance, my husband and I confronted a profound challenge. While the existing statute granted me the right to take time off from work, the reality was stark—I lacked the vacation or sick time necessary for the nine weeks essential to her recovery. Moreover, with only 60% of my income during this period, providing care more than 100 miles from my employer was financially untenable.

Our only viable option was to relocate my mother to Rhode Island so that we could personally care for her while continuing to work. As untrained healthcare aides, we grappled with the stressors of ensuring her dignity amidst the broader challenges of managing our work commitments and medical appointments. I vividly recall one harrowing incident in winter when, due to conflicting schedules, I had to leave the front door ajar for my mother's safety. It was a poignant reminder of our immense strain during those arduous nine weeks.

Extending the temporal scope of caregiver support is imperative to align with medical recommendations. Equally crucial is the assurance that individuals can fulfill familial responsibilities without jeopardizing their livelihoods. Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI), being fully funded by those contributing to it, presents a unique opportunity to make a profound difference without straining the state budget.

I urge you to consider expeditiously passing H7171 through the committee and lend your support to a floor vote. The impact of this legislation is far-reaching, touching the lives of countless Rhode Islanders who may find themselves in similar predicaments.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Melissa Emidy,
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