

Dear Chairperson Corvese and members of the House Labor Committee:

I am Natasha Blackadar from Providence. I am a licensed mental health counselor (LMHC) in Rhode Island specializing in perinatal mental health. I am a small business owner and run my own private therapy practice in Providence.

I support House bill 7171 because...

- 1 in 5 women experience some form of perinatal mood or anxiety disorder, which can extend from during pregnancy to months/years postpartum. Women who give birth, and the people who care for them, urgently need more time to recover not only from physical complications but mental health complications as well. Six weeks is not enough time to heal from labor, learn how to care for a newborn, identify the symptoms of postpartum depression/anxiety/OCD/psychosis, and seek and maintain appropriate mental health care.

- Maternal suicide is a leading cause of maternal death in the United States. This is an extremely vulnerable time in the weeks and months following birth. For women who are suffering from postpartum depression - and even those who are not - six weeks is simply not enough time to recover.

- Beyond the worst case scenario outcomes, six weeks is an inhumane amount of time. Every day of every week, I sit with new mothers who are terrified to leave their babies and return to work so soon after giving birth. The lack of paid family leave in this state is a form of structural oppression that causes significant negative impact on our community. The six weeks currently offered is paltry compared to our neighboring states, let alone other developed countries. If we want our state and towns and families to thrive, they need more time.

I urge you to vote in favor of bill H7171.

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

Sincerely,
Natasha Blackadar
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