



To: House Committee on Labor
From: Karen Malcolm, Protect Our Healthcare Coalition
Date: February 14, 2024
Re: **SUPPORT H7171** – Paid Family Leave

The Protect Our HealthCare Coalition is a group of leading Rhode Island non-profits and consumer groups with a goal to protect, improve, and expand equitable access to quality, person-centered, affordable health care for all. The Coalition strongly **supports House Bill 7171, which will extend the amount of paid family leave in Rhode Island to 12 weeks and** expand the family definition to be more inclusive.

The economic and health benefits of paid family leave are well documented.¹ Importantly, this bill's emphasis on extending paid leave to 12 weeks will strengthen the impact on the health and development of children by allowing for the doctor-recommended amount of time for parents to bond with newborns. Additionally, extending leave will benefit us all by supporting those caring for an elderly or disabled family member at home, which has been shown to reduce the need for nursing home care, allowing people to remain in their community. The expanded family definition will allow members of the immigrant, LGBTQ+, and foster care communities (who may not have access to a qualifying family member) to designate a caretaker and use this critical benefit.

H7171 is an important update to the state's Paid Family Leave Act that will impact the health and economic well-being of Rhode Islanders. Thank you for your consideration.

Protect Our Healthcare Coalition allies & partners: Economic Progress Institute, Mental Health Association RI, RI NOW, RI Parent Information Network, RI Health Center Association, United Way of Rhode Island, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, SEIU Rhode Island Council, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, Leukemia/Lymphoma Society, Foster Forward, RI Coalition for the Homeless, Rhode Island Working Families Party, Mental Health Recovery Coalition, Oasis Wellness & Recovery Center, RI Community Food Bank, Substance Use & Mental Health Leadership Council, The Womxn Project, Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families, HousingWorks RI, Rhode Island Organizing Project (RIOP), Thundermist Health Center, National Association of Social Workers RI Chapter

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¹ https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/646d2340-dcd4-4614-ada9-be5b1c3f445c/jec-fact-sheet--economic-benefits-of-paid-leave.pdf