

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



Rhode Island Chapter

Testimony in Support of H-7171
House Labor Committee

February 14, 2024

Dear Chairman Corvese and Members of the Committee,

The Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics would like to offer full support for Rhode Island House Bill 7171 which expands access to paid leave for all parents.

As pediatricians in Rhode Island, we frequently see the importance of paid family leave. In Rhode Island, this program is called the Temporary Caregiver Insurance Program (TCI). Many families in our practices use this program to care for newborn infants, adopted children, and children newly diagnosed with life altering conditions. The current program provides up to 6 weeks of partial wage replacement to workers who take time off from work to bond with a newborn, care for a foster or adopted child, or care for a seriously ill family member.

Research shows that allowing parents to take adequate time off to bond with a child is important to early brain development and overall health outcomes for children. It improves maternal health as well, as it increases rates of breastfeeding, decreases rates of maternal depression, and allows women to heal and recover from a vaginal or Caesarian Section Delivery. Representative Giraldo's bill would increase the allowed time off from 6 weeks to 12 weeks.

Over the past few years the vast majority of Rhode Islanders that have received TCI have been parents of newborns. We are hopeful that Rhode Islanders will continue to take advantage of this benefit, and that we'll be able to expand its reach to cover care for other crucial family members. Representative Giraldo's proposed legislation expands the family definition to include grandchildren and siblings, which is important since frequently family caregivers work together to meet the needs of a child. The Rhode Island Chapter of the AAP supports the legislation introduced by Representative Giraldo.

Rhode Island pediatricians work daily to improve the health and well-being for children and their families. All families should have an opportunity for caregivers to feel supported while caring for their loved ones. Expanding access to paid leave is necessary, so that caregivers do not have to choose between their job and their loved ones. Caregivers need increased support to allow for greater work-life balance. Parenting and caregiving needs are often unique to each family unit. Added access and flexibility improves outcomes for children, families, and the community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allison W. Brindle".

Allison W. Brindle, MD, FAAP
President, Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
East Greenwich, Rhode Island

Officers

President

Allison Brindle, MD, FAAP
Phone: 401/444-8531
allisonbrindle@gmail.com

Vice President

Peter Pogacar, MD, FAAP
Phone: 401/884-8900
prpogacar@gmail.com

Secretary

Shuba Kamath, MD, FAAP
Phone: 401/444-8531
shuba_kamath@brown.edu

Treasurer

Sara Ford, MD, FAAP
Phone: 401/444-4612
SFord@lifespan.org

Immediate Past President

Gregory A. Fox, MD, FAAP
Phone: 401/438-6888
gregory_fox_md@brown.edu

Chapter Executive Director

Jennifer L. Mann, MPH
Phone: 401/743-1507
jmann.aapri@gmail.com

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Mailing Address:

American Academy of Pediatrics
Rhode Island Chapter
PO Box 20365
Cranston, RI 02920