



# State of Rhode Island COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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## TESTIMONY

**BILL NO.:** 2024 H 7171  
An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Temporary  
Disability Insurance

**PRIMARY SPONSORS:** Representative Giraldo

**COMMITTEE:** House Labor

**DATE:** Feb. 14, 2024

The Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights (“Commission”) **supports** this bill. The Commission is the state’s primary antidiscrimination law enforcement agency charged with investigating allegations of discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, credit and delivery of services. Among the allegations investigated by the Commission are those of race, ancestral origin, age, gender identity, sex and disability discrimination.

**The bill revises the definition of who is eligible to take temporary caregiver leave to include siblings, grandchildren, and those caring for “care recipients.” It also expands coverage to 12 weeks and increases the weekly dependent's allowances from \$10 to \$20.**

While Rhode Island was a leader when it passed temporary caregiver insurance in 2013, it has lagged other states in refining and improving its program. Rhode Island currently offers up to 6 weeks. Out of other states that have temporary caregiver leave, most offer up to 12 weeks, including Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine, New York and New Jersey. This bill would put Rhode Island on par with its neighbors by offering up to 12 weeks of leave.

Secondly, currently Rhode Island’s definitions for who an employee may take caregiving leave for are mostly limited to guardian/child or marriage/domestic partner relationships. This can adversely impact those with non-traditional family structures or living with found family instead of blood relations. Connecticut’s law, for example, includes “an individual related to the employee by blood or affinity whose close association the employee shows to be equivalent to [a] family relationship.” Conn. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 31-51kk (West). This bill would address that disparity by permitting an employee to take leave to care for a grandchild, sibling or “a person for whom the employee is responsible for providing or arranging health or safety related care” regardless of whether that person is a blood relation.

As this bill would both help Rhode Island continue to offer competitive caregiver leave benefits and address a disparity in the existing law, the **Commission urges the members of the Labor Committee to vote in support of this bill.**

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