

Testimony in support of Paid Family Leave
Public Hearing on Jobs, Wages, and Benefits
November 2016
Rebecca Barson

Hi, my name is Rebecca Barson. I am a resident of Woodley Park in Ward 3, and I am proud to say that I reside in ANC3C, one of the 14 ANCs in DC that have passed a resolution in support of paid family leave. I am also a public health professional, primarily focused on issues related to women and families - I have a masters degree in public health from Johns Hopkins, and nine months ago I decided to start my own business as a health policy consultant here in DC. This decision put me in good company - as a recent report from the Freelancers Union found, a full 35% of the U.S. workforce, or 55 million Americans, are currently freelancers, with both the number and percentage continuing to rise. And most of us who freelance do it by choice, as I do - we like both the flexibility and control we have over our work.

However, one of the biggest challenges of freelancing is putting together your own benefit package as that is traditionally provided by one's employer. Going out on my own, I knew that I would be able to access health insurance, thanks to the Affordable Care Act, and I was impressed by how smooth the experience was on DC HealthLink. As an aside, I would be remiss to not take a moment at this hearing to say that I am concerned about what will happen going forward with affordable health insurance for those of us who are not traditionally employed. I urge DC to explore options to preserve coverage both for those covered right now by the Medicaid expansion, as we did before the passage of the ACA, as well as to explore if there is a way to maintain an affordable insurance market for those now covered by the Marketplace who do not have access to employer-sponsored insurance.

In terms of other benefits when I went out on my own, I assumed that they wouldn't be available to me and that the burden would fall on me to figure out a plan for them - like contributing to my retirement account as I see fit. I was, therefore, thrilled to learn that DC's plan for paid family and medical leave is forward-thinking enough to provide a provision for those who are self-employed to be able to buy in and make use of this benefit when they have a qualifying event. These are the types of benefits that make a city like DC an attractive place to set up a business and keeps us competitive, and I commend the Council for their forward thinking. Additionally, these are the kinds of arrangements that more cities and states should be thinking about as the percentage of the workforce who are self-employed and freelancing continues to grow, as it looks likely to do, so DC has an opportunity to be on the cutting edge of this trend and a model going forward. I offer my strong support for this provision.

In addition, coming from my professional and educational background in public health and working with women and families, I strongly support the bill being broader rather than narrower on a number of fronts, as in the original bill. This includes covering 16 weeks rather than 12 or fewer and including a broad definition of family that is inclusive rather than exclusive. For example, I will likely need for family leave to take care of my parents, and I share this concern with so many others in the District who have aging parents.

The benefits of paid family and medical leave are clear, and DC has a responsibility to protect our most vulnerable workers with these provisions, as the DC government and many other private employers have chosen to protect their employees. Thank you for your time.

LINDSAY A. VIDENIEKS

TESTIMONY BEFORE MAYORAL WORKING GROUP ON PAID FAMILY & MEDICAL LEAVE
PUBLIC HEARING ON JOBS, WAGES, AND BENEFITS
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19TH, 2016

Mayor Bowser and Members of the Working Group. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of the DC Universal Paid Leave Act.

My name is Lindsay Videnieks and I am a resident of Ward 4 where my husband and I have been homeowners for 10 years. We have two children, a daughter who is 4 and a son who is 15 months.

My daughter was born unexpectedly, a month before her due date, at Sibley Hospital here in the District. She suffered from dangerously high bilirubin levels, struggled to feed because my milk supply was not sufficient, and was, as the doctor reminded us “a bit undercooked.” She needed additional nurturing and medical support. I had a difficult delivery that required extended bed rest.

Thankfully, I was able to afford a lactation consultant and was given generous leeway at my consulting job to work from home with a reduced schedule. My firm did not have a paid leave policy but they did accommodate my family. Still, I joined conference calls from home while nursing a 2 week old and considered myself lucky. I’m the exception.

The first time I had the courage to venture out with my baby alone was to pick up some dinner. I went to a local take-out place where I had made friends with the manager. We had both been very pregnant at the same time and had a chuckle about that whenever I would go in. Coincidentally, she also had given birth to her son early.

But her experience was very different. As the primary earner in her household, she could not afford to take unpaid maternity leave and had to return to work almost immediately. She did not have the opportunity to spend hours to increase her milk supply, so the mental, emotional, and physical benefits of breastfeeding to both mother and child were taken from her. She did not have long days to bond with her son during a critical period where infants develop attachment. This should not be considered a luxury.

We work hard as a city through programs like universal pre-K to try to ensure that every child has a fair chance at a good life, regardless of their parents’ financial situation. Paid Family Leave is a natural extension of that successful approach, needed during a time in an infant’s life that is so incredibly fleeting yet formative. Premature babies, who are more fragile and vulnerable, need this nurturing and bonding time even more. Many of the most severely premature infants require extended hospital stays or suffer from related issues that necessitate additional care.

According to the March of Dimes, DC has a high rate of premature births – nearly 10 percent.¹ DC ranks dead last in the United States for racial / ethnic disparities around premature births.² Wards 5,

¹ March of Dimes, “2016 District of Columbia Premature Birth Report Card” available at: <http://www.marchofdimes.org/materials/premature-birth-report-card-united-states.pdf>

² “District of Columbia Health Indicators,” KidsCount, available at: <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#DC/3/27/28,29,30,31,32,34,33/char/0>

7, and 8 all happen to have the highest rates of these poor health indicators – infant mortality is 10 times higher in DC’s poorest wards.³ This is wrong, and we have much to do to protect our moms and babies from these terrible outcomes. Paid Family Leave will help ensure that working parents are able to have healthier births and care for tiny, at-risk babies.

Now for a quick economic argument, because I know that is important too.

Research shows that paid leave is a huge win for businesses. Studies have shown that it increases the likelihood that moms will return to work after giving birth, improves employee morale, has zero or net positive effects on productivity, reduces costs to employers through improved employee retention, and improves family incomes. Research further suggests that expanding paid leave is likely to have economy-wide benefits such as reduced government spending on public assistance and increased labor force participation, which would bring similar economic gains, generating a larger tax base and increased consumer spending.⁴ This is an amazing list of benefits - it is well worth the cost, especially when we consider the true costs of doing nothing.

Finally, I might add, we’re about to enter an era of federal lawmaking where the majority party has been vocal about slashing government programs, especially those for the poorest and most vulnerable. The District should lead by example by pushing back not in defiance, but to reflect sound policymaking that puts the citizens of our great city – particularly its most vulnerable - first. That’s leadership.

I therefore respectfully ask the Mayor and my own Councilmember Brandon Todd to support Paid Family Medical Leave for the District. I know the Mayor wanted to hear about this program, but, since she isn’t here, please relay our stories to her. Ward 4 residents are watching this issue closely. Thank you for your consideration.

Lindsay Videnieks



³ Id.

⁴ Gault, et. al, “Paid Parental Leave in the United States,” Institute for Women’s Policy Research, Mar. 2014.

Testimony of Mary Laura Calhoun

November 19, 2016

Hi, everyone! My name is Mary Laura Calhoun and I'd like to tell you a story about why paid family and medical leave is so important to me.

As a teacher in DC Public Schools, I hoped to use the summer break as maternity leave. Things didn't quite go according to plan. My daughter was due to be born in August -- just before the school year was to start. In June, my doctors told me I'd have to quit working immediately. I'd developed high blood pressure, then later pre-eclampsia, and finally HELLP syndrome -- a condition that, left untreated, was likely to have killed both my baby and me. To save our lives, my daughter was born early via C-section. While Isabel and I were undergoing a complicated surgery, my husband wondered if he had just become a single father or if, even worse, he would be leaving the hospital alone. Thankfully, we were all released from the hospital a few days later.

Although we had been sent home, neither Isabel nor I were anything close to healthy. I was in significant pain from surgery and Isabel was suffering from being born before she was ready. She was too weak to nurse and lost a significant amount of weight. For almost three months, I pumped milk for her at least 8 times a day while my husband fed her through a syringe. It was a full time job for both of us.

It took 24 full weeks to get me and Isabel healthy and strong. Thankfully, with the summer off, accrued sick leave, and 8 weeks of employer-provided paid family leave, I was never forced to choose between my or my baby's health and paying the mortgage. My husband and I had prepared the best we could for the arrival of our baby, but we had no way to know that I would be so sick before her birth or that she would take so much care when she came home. Most parents, like us, try to prepare - and even if you have a healthy baby you realize how impossible it is to really be ready. For families like mine, when emergencies upend all our plans, paid leave is the difference between making it through scarred but OK - without a full blown financial crisis.

Every single day in DC, other families are are forced to make the choice -- do I take care of my sick family member or do I pay the bills? No family should ever have to ask that question. And that is why we cannot wait one more day to pass paid family leave for all.

Testimony in support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015

November 19, 2016

Testimony of Lindsay Dupertuis

My name is Lindsay Dupertuis and I am 29 years old. I'm here because I support the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015. I've been a DC resident for over six years, currently living in the Lamond-Riggs neighborhood in Ward 5. I love living in the District and I try to be an active member of the community. I'm a registered DC voter and I volunteer as a literacy tutor in Columbia Heights. I hope to live here for years to come.

I have a lot of hopes and dreams for the future. Unfortunately, life doesn't always go how you plan it. I know this from experience. Out of the blue, I've developed two autoimmune diseases since I turned 22. They are incurable and they affect my well-being every day. Sometimes it is difficult to function, but I don't want to give up on my life. I love working. I've been told that I am an *excellent* employee.¹ I want to work as long as my health allows.

Sadly, I won't be able to support myself forever. Because of my condition, I will need a liver transplant at some point during the next decade. I dread that moment—not just because I might die, but because I will need to rely on my spouse, siblings, and parents to care for me during that time. A liver transplant costs many thousands of dollars.² How could my spouse take unpaid leave when we face that kind of bill? *Every single day*, I worry that I will financially ruin my family because of my health problems.

However, with paid medical and family leave, I hope that we can weather this hardship. I could take more time off of work before I completely lose my income. My spouse could accompany me through hardest part of my recovery. He won't have to decide between caring for me and paying rent. That gives me a lot of hope.

Every year, dozens, if not hundreds, of people in D.C. are waiting for organ transplants.³ Some need livers and many need kidneys, but all of them rely on family members while they wait for that life-saving surgery. We need solutions for this real-world problem. At some point in our lives, everyone finds themselves needing to care for our loved ones, or ask for their care. Paid family leave with a comprehensive definition of family is a compassionate and *practical* solution to problems that we all face. Please keep my hope alive and pass this legislation. Thank you.

¹ People with disabilities (which includes autoimmune illnesses) have much to contribute to the labor force. See DePaul University's 2007 report, "Exploring the Bottom Line..."

http://bbi.syr.edu/assets/staff_bio_publications/McDonald_Exploring_the_Bottom_Line_2007.pdf

² See data from "United Network for Organ Sharing," (UNOS):

<https://transplantliving.org/before-the-transplant/financing-a-transplant/the-costs/>

³ According to the Washington Regional Transplant Community, in 2015 there were over 2,000 people in the Metropolitan Area waiting for organs. <http://www.beadonor.org/donation-facts/for-patients/waiting-list>

Testimony of Porter McConnell
Public Hearing on Jobs, Wages, and Benefits

My name is Porter McConnell. Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience as a DC resident since 2007 and job creator in Ward 2. I run a small international nonprofit called the Financial Transparency Coalition and I employ 5 people locally. Each time an employee is expecting a child, I struggle to come up with the funds and apply a consistent leave policy. Some years we have a reserve we can dip into, others we don't.

I have colleagues in other countries, and they all have government programs and insurance plans to cover family leave. When I cobbled together 3 ½ months of parental leave for my son a couple years back, my board members from India, Peru, Germany were appalled that that's all the leave I got. I had to explain to them that I was one of the fortunate few to get paid leave in the United States.

I would welcome the ability to pay taxes into a government program, and then be able to access funds the next time the need comes up. Last year, a consultant working for the city of Montreal invited me to relocate my organization there. One of the big benefits was the city and Canada's more family friendly policies. Quebec wanted to attract international nonprofit jobs, because they bring a highly educated workforce that creates other jobs. I know there has been a lot of talk of companies in DC moving away due to leave policies and I'm here to say, yes, jobs like mine and the ones created in my sector are mobile and if DC wants to keep them, they need to *lead* on leave, not back away under pressure by a race to the bottom culture.

Right now, there are 116 DC nonprofits who have signed a coalition letter supporting paid family leave. I'd like to share some quick facts about my industry locally that I think make a strong case for universal paid family leave:

- **It's large:** 1 in every 10 DMV workers is employed in the nonprofit sector. That's six times as many jobs as the real estate sector.¹
- **It's growing:** In DC, nonprofit jobs grew by 11.1% from 2007-2012.²
- **It's counter-cyclical:** the nonprofit industry grows during recession when for-profit jobs decline. Also in DC from 2007-2012, for-profit jobs increased by only 3.4%, and they declined in Maryland (-4.7%) and Virginia (-3.7%).³

¹ Nonprofits Count: The Economic and Social Impacts of Nonprofits in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Virginia 2016, pg.9. Available at: https://www.nonprofitadvancement.org/system/files/Nonprofits%20Count%20Report%20and%20Appendix_WEB_1.pdf

² Nonprofits Count 2016, pg. 8.

³ Nonprofits Count 2016, pg. 8.

- **Most nonprofits are small:** Ninety-one percent of the region's nonprofits have incomes under \$1 million, and would be considered small employers.⁴

I understand the Chamber has proposed that only large employers be required to provide only 8 weeks paid leave. As someone who has had a baby, I know 8 weeks is definitely not enough, and it's also far less than our peer cities in other nations offer. An exemption, delay, or wishful thinking that the private market will act to create a paid family leave product for small employers would also be a huge mistake. Trusting payment of paid leave claims for my employees to the for-profit private insurance industry would negatively impact my small NGO, and 91% of the organizations in my industry, which again, employs more workers locally than any sector other than retail. Only covering the employees of large employers would just be duplicating the mistakes of the Family Medical Leave Act of 1993. An employer mandate is *not* the way to go.

But forget all the facts and figures. Here is the bottom line for me: if DC can pass a universal family leave bill that would be funded by a tax on all employers and apply to all workers, as an employer in DC it would make me more likely to stay here and to hire here.

Please work with Chairman Mendelson and permit your agencies to engage in dialogue with his staff as they finalize the bill. In these uncertain times, this is one of the most effective and enduring contributions your Administration could make to the District's economy.

⁴ Nonprofits Count 2016, pg. 4.

**Testimony of Jourgette Reid-Sillah, Ward 8
Working Group on Jobs, Wages, and Benefits
November 19, 2016**

My name is Jourgette Reid-Sillah. I live nearby in Congress Heights.

Just last month it was Breast Cancer Awareness Month. While many people were wearing pink ribbons, as a breast cancer survivor I was doing something else: advocating for paid family and medical leave in DC.

I was diagnosed with breast cancer in September of 2008. My first thoughts were about my children and my husband, and who would care for them and love them if I did not survive. After my surgery, I needed my family to help me with everyday activities. Though I wasn't accustomed to needing others to wait on me, it's what my body required.

In radiation therapy five days a week, I bonded with other women in treatment for this terrible disease that disproportionately impacts women in my community in Ward 8. In particular we talked about how cancer had been a financial blow to our families. It was difficult enough going through grueling radiation treatments without having to worry about how we would afford our basic needs.

Fortunately for me and my family, I had access to 16 weeks of short-term disability insurance. For fifteen years, I had worked at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, in a job requiring great physical stamina. There was no way that I could do this job while recovering from surgery and going through treatments. But because my union, Unite HERE Local 25, has a strong bargaining agreement with the Hotel Association of Washington, I had access to benefits that provided my family a lifeline at a terrible time.

Paid leave helped my family maintain some dignity while I healed and went through radiation. But because disability benefits only covered a small part of my paycheck, cancer still put intense financial strain on our family.

Life doesn't stop when you have cancer. When I was diagnosed, both our son and our daughter were in college. Our family and friends helped us with food, rides to doctor's appointments, and caring for me while my husband worked. But it was still a constant struggle to juggle money and keep our heads above water.

So many people going through the ordeal of cancer treatment don't have any kind of paid leave. In fact, only 6% of low-income workers have access to paid family leave and 17% have access to paid short term disability programs, and in DC this means that our

African American and Latino workers are disproportionately impacted by the lack of leave. The Universal Paid Leave Act would set up an insurance system so that everyone in the city would have access to both paid family and paid medical leave.

Based on my experience, two specific provisions in the Universal Paid Leave Act are crucial:

First, it is important to have a meaningful length of leave available. Everyone's cancer journey is different, but for many breast cancer patients we must undergo both surgery and either radiation and/ or chemotherapy. The Universal Paid Leave Act was introduced with 16 weeks of leave, which is a great start but could still not be enough time. It would be a shame if this Working Group recommended that the Council reduce the amount of leave available.

Second, it is important that caregivers can also take paid leave, so that individuals with cancer have the support they need. I needed my husband's care. Between his sick leave and my friends and family we were able to get by, but it would have been better for him to be able to take family caregiving leave instead of using up sick days that are intended for people to recover from colds or minor, short illnesses. For anyone who's single and does not have a spouse or nearby family to rely on, this is impossible. Many people develop cancer when they are older, and they rely on their adult children to help them through treatment. It is critical that any bill covers caregivers of the diverse kinds that we and our families include so that everyone can get the help they need - and care for their loved ones - during serious illnesses.

My story has a happy ending. After I recovered, I returned to work and have since retired, gone back to school finally, and will graduate from the University of the District of Columbia in December. And most importantly, I am eight years cancer-free.

I hope that this taskforce will put the needs of people with cancer, and our families, first. A strong paid leave policy will do much more for us than wearing a pink ribbon.

Testimony of Courtenay Lewis
Public Hearing on Jobs, Wages, and Benefits

Good afternoon.

My name is Courtenay Lewis and I am an artist and writer living in Ward 6. Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this Public Hearing on Jobs, Wages, and Benefits. I am going to specifically talk about the current proposal for paid family leave in the District.

I first moved to Washington in 2006 after living in Europe for two decades. As a young professional in DC, one thing that particularly struck me was how quickly parents returned to work after the birth of a child. In Europe, my friends had paid family leave policies stretching from 39 weeks to 56 weeks.¹ They went back to work energized, excited, and without new financial insecurities. But in Washington, parents come back to work exhausted, expressing additional regret at not having enough time with their newborns.

It is shocking that the young American parents I reference were the lucky ones by DC standards. In other cities, governments appreciate that families in hard financial circumstances need paid leave the most. In London, my birthplace, a low-income parent will receive 90 percent of her salary for up to 39 weeks of parental leave.² In Toronto, my husband's birthplace, a low-income parent will receive up to 80 percent of their income for up to 50 weeks of parental leave.³ But in Washington there are no such protections. A low-income parent who is not fortunate enough to work for a company with good benefits could have no paid leave whatsoever. Right now, only 12% of the workforce has paid family leave.⁴ For these families, a lack of a paid leave policies robs parents of time with their infants that can help save infant lives.⁵ For medium-income families, a District

¹Washington Post, "The Smart Economics of Norway's Parental Leave, and Why the U.S. Should Consider it"

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2016/01/11/the-smart-economics-of-norways-parental-leave/>

² UK Government: "Statutory Maternity Pay and Leave: Employer Guide"

<https://www.gov.uk/employers-maternity-pay-leave/entitlement>

³ Government of Canada, "Employment Insurance Maternity and Parental Benefits"

http://www.esdc.gc.ca/en/reports/ei/maternity_parental.page

⁴Institute for Women's Policy Research, "Paid Parental Leave in the United States: What the Data Tell Us about Access, Usage, and Economic and Health Benefits"

<http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/paid-parental-leave-in-the-united-states-what-the-data-tell-us-about-access-usage-and-economic-and-health-benefits/>

⁵ Newsweek, "Washington's Poorest Infants are 10 Times More Likely to Die than its Richest"

<http://www.newsweek.com/washington-global-infant-maternal-mortality-328148>

without paid leave risks couples wanting to leave for more family-friendly states like New York and California.

I also wanted to stress the importance of a family leave bill that allows self-employed people to pay into the system. After years of working on campaigns, in the federal government, and at NGOs, I learned that there is a critical need for artists to help NGOs tell visual stories to reach a wider audience. To fill that gap, I recently left my secure job to become self-employed. Now I create illustrations and graphics for NGOs doing important social and environmental work. I would be honored to pay into a system that would support me if I ever decide to have children, or if I ever need to take time to care for ill family members, or for myself during an emergency. However keeping self-employed and small businesses out of a paid leave plan, like the Chamber of Commerce has proposed,⁶ threatens to make DC a place that squashes innovation and creativity, and simply rewards a few people who work in large corporations. DC has an amazing history of innovators—people who took a risk and changed the history of the city. We cannot create policies that leaves these innovators out.

Thank you.

Courtenay Lewis

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⁶Washington Business Journal, “D.C. Business Groups Float New Paid Leave Proposal”
<http://www.bizjournals.com/washington/news/2016/09/19/d-c-business-groups-float-new-paid-leave-proposal.html>

Public Hearing on Jobs, Wages, and Benefits
Testimony of Marilyn Pratt-Givens

My name is Marilyn Pratt-Givens and I live in Ward 7. I'm here to support paid family AND medical leave.

In December of 1992 I was working for Verizon, loving my job and colleagues and never missing a day of work - it was so rewarding. On Christmas Eve, I discovered a lump in my right breast. I went to my doctor, who sent me to have it checked.

The technician advised me that it was a benign tumor. When going into have a biopsy I had my mother and dad there, and we thought the lump would be removed and it was over. But when I woke up from anesthesia, I noticed my mother was crying. She told me I had cancer. It was shocking.

My next step was lumpectomy, chemotherapy, radiation, and I lost my hair. During my treatment, my big brother would drive my parents back and forth to DC from Pennsylvania and pick me up to go to back home to be cared for. My mother, and boyfriend, who is now my husband, and my family and friends were there to take me to chemotherapy. I got short term leave with full pay and then later half pay with long term disability.

Lumpectomy, chemo and radiation took a lot out of me, and not being able to have my mother by my side was the worse. Chemotherapy, radiation and hair loss made my life depressing and miserable. My mother did not have FMLA. If she had, she might have been able to stay with me, even though FMLA is unpaid and therefore almost impossible to take. My stepfather could not come, because I was not his biological daughter and could not get FMLA, even though he had helped raise me. My teenage son stood up to the plate. Since Calvin and I were not married, he was not eligible for FMLA, but he did all he could when he was not working. I finished radiation, knowing I would just be healed to go back to work. I stayed sick and on medication when I went back to work, but I needed to go back because my leave had run out.

In 1994-95 I woke up one day with a red scar on my forehead and 2 bald spots in my head. It was then that I discovered I had Lupus, that day being the first time ever even hearing that word. My body took on more aches and pains. I was continuously going to different specialists, which I still do today. My rheumatologist and I spoke about long term disability so that I could get better. Verizon had me to come back to work. Going back to work for those months on medication was hard. It was great seeing my colleagues, but hard on my mind and body. I was trying to keep my job and benefits as Verizon battled with my doctors.

On August 2, 1996, while at my desk working, one of the managers came to my desk and told me that my rheumatologist wanted me out of work now. That was my last day at work there. Loving, and succeeding at, my job, it was not a positive decision to leave what I loved doing.

Battling two illnesses together was and still is not easy, but with God, learning everyday how to manage and live with everyday pains, my positive attitude, determination to live, great doctors, good family and friends, I knew I was alright.

But in November 2009 and again in 2010 my lungs collapsed. The first time, I was at my home with my daughter Tara, granddaughter Tavii, niece Kayla and nephew Layden there. I got bad chest pains and advised the kids to call 911. I didn't really know what was going on, and I was reluctant to go to the hospital. Of course, my husband insisted, and rushed me to the hospital. Both times we got there just in time. Tubes and surgery helped save my life. My life still remains in daily pain. I am learning to live and control it.

Mayor Bowser and members of this working group: we need to pass the Universal Paid Leave Act. What would you do if this happened to you? Would you be able to take paid leave? If not, let's change that. If you would, shouldn't everyone have that opportunity? I did not know I would need it, and we all could need it to care for a loved one in our lives or ourselves. We do not have control over our lives and never know when Paid Leave will help, especially when it hits home. Illnesses are not planned in our futures, when it happens it happens without warning and prejudice. I'm asking you to lead on leave.

November 19, 2016 - Mayor's Working group on Jobs, Wages, and Benefits
Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act
Aliyah Dash, Ward 4 Resident

I am here to express my ardent support for DC's Universal Paid Leave Act. My husband and I are Ward 4 residents and we have a two-year-old daughter.

When I gave birth to our daughter, I took 16 weeks of unpaid leave. My husband also took a few weeks of unpaid leave. It was critically important to us to both care for our newborn those first few weeks of her life. It may seem fortunate that we were able to take unpaid leave, but in reality it didn't feel like a choice. Of course we felt we needed to care for our newborn together, equally, the first few weeks of her life, despite the overwhelming financial burden of losing our paychecks right at a time when expenses multiplied with newborn necessities—from diapers to daycare application fees and more.

The stress of the financial burden of unpaid leave no doubt exacerbated what I later discovered was postpartum anxiety and depression, for which I sought treatment. It is painful to reflect on that debilitating fear and sadness, which increased when I returned to work. What I hoped would be a time of joy and adaptation to our growing family became months of exhaustion and stress over making ends meet while digging into our modest savings.

Mayor Bowser and this Working Group, it is wrong to expect families, especially those already struggling, to rely on unpaid leave when they give birth to a baby. And most people, in fact, don't even have *that*. The stress of knowing that at any time we might confront an impossible choice between a loved one and a paycheck -- and that we are teetering on the brink of financial insecurity because of that -- is an injustice the DC Council and this Working Group can fix. And as devoted public servants, we are also deeply concerned that a lack of family-supportive policies has become a local and a national liability.

I can attest to the impact this legislation would have made on my family. Without the stress of unpaid leave, my symptoms of postpartum depression and anxiety would not have been as severe, and I would have been better able to recognize and address them with the support of an income during that critical time. I would have been better prepared to return to work, and more productive.

Mayor Bowser, you don't have to rely on my personal story—the data support my claim that paid leave alleviates postpartum depression, a condition that approximately 15% of women who become pregnant experience (and as high as 25% in high-poverty areas). That's a significant portion of our workforce. A study by University of Maryland researchers concluded that the incidence of postpartum depression dramatically decreases with moderately increased paid maternity leave time.¹

¹ Dagher, R., McGovern, P., & Dowd, B. (2014). Maternity leave duration and postpartum mental and physical health: Implications for leave policies. *Journal of Health and Politics, Policy, and Law*.

Mayor Bowser, this legislation will surely have a positive impact on the DC economy, by helping the 15% of women who experience postpartum depression get the help they need and return to their jobs. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Testimony of Leanne Sedowski

Ward 4 Resident

November 2016

My name is Leanne Sedowski, and I am a resident of Ward 4, and a 10-year resident of DC.

When I was 25 weeks pregnant, I went in to the doctor for what I thought was going to be a routine appointment. Unfortunately, at the visit, my doctor told me to go immediately to GW Hospital as I had a life-threatening condition, and my baby and I were both in danger. In total, I was in the hospital for 2.5 weeks, and on bed rest for another 4 weeks. My daughter was born at 31 weeks, which is more than 2 months premature, weighing just 2.5 pounds. She spent a month in the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit (or NICU). In all, I was out of work for almost 6 months.

During my time on bedrest and after our daughter was born but still in the hospital, my partner and I were consumed with worries about our daily survival. While I was desperately worried about my daughter, I was also constantly worried about my job, and how my family would afford to live without my full income for so long. The stress of that period was incredible on me and my family. Instead of focusing all our energies on our daughter and her wellbeing, we were distracted by finances and the potential of job loss.

I am here testifying today for other parents who do not have any source of paid leave. While in the NICU, we were surrounded by other parents, as fearful for their babies' wellbeing as we were, but who did not have paid leave from their jobs. Their babies were alone much of the time while their parents had to be at work. It was devastating to see parents who couldn't be where they needed to be, next to their own children. I wish that other parents could have access to benefits like us, so that, if the worst circumstances come to pass, they can be where they are needed the most and not stuck at work leaving their new babies all alone.

Hear this loud and clear: DC needs to pass paid leave. The Universal Paid Leave Act at the Council, offering twelve weeks of leave with a meaningful wage replacement, would make DC a leader in our nation. Even so, we are not asking for anything more generous than the basic right to be caretakers. Our incoming national leaders will not treat paid leave as a priority for at least 4 years. DC can make a difference here and now, by passing this legislation. Please recommend this course of action to the Mayor and Council.

Working Group on Jobs, Wages, and Benefits
Public Hearing
November 19th, 2016
Jessica Raven

My name is Jessica Raven, and I'm a mom in Ward 5. I'm here to express my support of the Universal Paid Leave Act.

I was working at the local community organization, Bread for the City, when I gave birth to my son, Max. I was able to take off twelve weeks of paid leave, including vacation time, sick time, and two weeks that I spent working from home before returning to the office. Even at twelve weeks, I felt that my son was too young, too small, and too fragile to be in daycare, an environment where he wouldn't access as much individual attention as I could have given him. But I also felt that it was the right amount of time to build a connection with my newborn and to pump and store enough breastmilk to last a few months before getting back to work.

What I didn't anticipate was all of the additional time I would need to take away from work during my son's first year for illnesses, injuries, and check-ups. Being in daycare, he had pink eye twice before he turned one -- and he passed it onto me once. He had colds and viruses, and frequent doctor's visits. His daycare closed unexpectedly when the air conditioning broke during the hottest week of summer, and again during a Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease outbreak. A number of other unpredictable circumstances cropped up during that first year, not to mention the times that I got sick, or injured, or just needed a day off. As a single parent, when Max gets sick or hurt and needs to stay home or go to the doctor, it's up to me to take him. That's why

I don't support the alternative proposal that would require me to spend down my paid sick days — which seems to be about cutting corners instead of employee protection and retention.

being forced to spend down my [non/ASSLA] paid sick days, which the Chamber of Commerce and business lobby's alternative proposal would require, makes no sense, and clearly comes from a place of wanting to cut corners rather a commitment to employee protection and retention.

12 weeks may make sense under the best of all possible circumstances, but nobody *really* has access to the best circumstances. We need workplace policies that accommodate the lives of single working parents who need to take care of their families and need to take care of ourselves.

Thank you for your consideration.



WORKING FAMILIES

carol@working-families.org

Date: November 19,2016

To: Mayor Bowser and Members of the Working Group on Jobs, Wages and Benefits

From: Carol Joyner, Director, Labor Project for Working Families in partnership with FV@W

Re: Testimony – Public Hearing on Jobs, Wages and Benefits

Thank you, Mayor Bowser and Members of the Working Group on Jobs, Wages and Benefits, for the opportunity to submit testimony today. My name is Carol Joyner, Director of the Labor Project for Working Families (LPWF). We work in partnership with Family Values @ Work and allies to build family-friendly workplaces. I am also a ward 4 resident. We support legislation that will help all families thrive in the District and build economic security. We supported the DC Minimum Wage Amendment Act, The Hours and Scheduling Stability Act and have been heavily engaged in passage of the Universal Paid Leave Act that I'll address today.

When my family moved to DC in 2005, my mother had been diagnosed with Alzhiemer's disease and Dad was almost 78 years old. As my mother's disease progressed, and it was impossible for Dad to care for her, we moved them here from NJ and they lived in Chevy Chase House for several years. During that time, Mom's health declined, and dad was diagnosed with bladder cancer. Caring for my parents was only part of my caregiving. My partner and I were also raising two children – call us poster children for the “sandwich generation.” Surgeries, hospitalizations, and doctor's appointments became a regular part of my life.

I had gone from being just a parent to a total caregiver, along with my full-time job.

Living through this period has convinced me even more that we need a robust form of paid family leave. Every family should benefit from taking time to care: no less than 12 weeks of time off with pay that is job-protected and can be used for both welcoming a new baby and times when illness strikes. We must ensure that all families can make use of the law and that there is sufficient wage replacement. Otherwise we're saying to families who earn less money: there is a policy but you won't be able to afford to use it. Those who need it the most will be excluded.

We support the Universal Paid Leave Act because it will mitigate the financial hit so many families take due to caregiving. That money is lost not only to the family, but to the businesses that depend on their spending. .

Finally, as we watch our city change demographically, and in every way imaginable, residents, old and new, want to raise a family, care for those who raised them and actually afford to live here. When I was caring for my parents, I was fortunate to have paid family leave in my employment policies. Eight years of care and I never lost any pay. But I was the only one in my family with paid leave. That increased the responsibility on me and came at a financial and emotional loss for my siblings.

The lack of paid family leave is a moral and economic problem across the country but in DC, it's a problem we can fix. You can ensure that DC helps pave the way and lets every family be a strong family.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Carol Joyner
Labor Project for Working Families
Ward 4
carol@working-families.org



Testimony of Ilana Boivie, Senior Policy Analyst at the Mayor's Working Group on Jobs, Wages, and Benefits November 19, 2016

Members of the working group, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Ilana Boivie, and I am the Senior Policy Analyst at the DC Fiscal Policy Institute. DCFPI is a non-profit organization that promotes budget and policy choices to expand economic opportunity and reduce income inequality for District of Columbia residents, through independent research and policy recommendations.

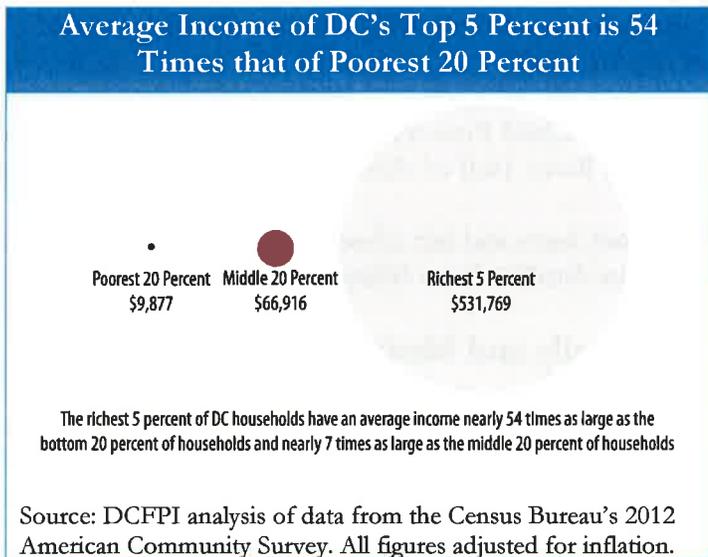
I am here to express support for a universal paid leave program, as well as fair scheduling legislation, in the District of Columbia.

DC's Income Inequality Continues to Grow

In recent years, DC has experienced stagnant wages, very high income inequality, a level of poverty that has not recovered from a spike during the Great Recession, and high housing cost burdens.

Wide Income Gaps: The average income of the poorest fifth of DC households is under \$10,000. Meanwhile the top 5 percent of DC households have incomes over half a million, the highest among major U.S. cities. As a result, income inequality in the District is fourth widest among major U.S. cities.¹

Falling Wages: For nearly three decades, wages have actually been falling for residents without advanced education. Since 1980, while pay for the typical college-educated resident has risen \$5 an hour, for residents with a high school diploma, wages have actually fallen by \$2 per hour.²



¹ DC Fiscal Policy Institute, [High and Wide: Income Inequality Gap in the District One of the Biggest in the U.S.](#), March 20, 2014.

² DC Fiscal Policy Institute, [Two Paths to Better Jobs for DC Residents: Improved Training and Stronger Job Protections](#). October 15, 2015.

For Communities of Color, More Difficulty Finding Work: DC’s Black and Latino residents are more likely to be unemployed and to stay out of work for an extended period when they lose a job.³ Black workers increasingly stay unemployed for an extended period of time, and are far more likely to do so than white workers. In 2012, more than half of Black workers who lost their job stayed out of work more than six months, compared with three in 10 white unemployed workers.⁴

Involuntary Part-Time Work: More than two-fifths of residents without a high school degree who work part-time want full-time work but cannot find it.⁵

Significant Poverty Years into an Economic Recovery: Some 110,500 DC residents lived in poverty in 2015, earning less than \$24,000 for a family of four. The number of poor residents is 18,500 higher than in 2007, just before the Great Recession.

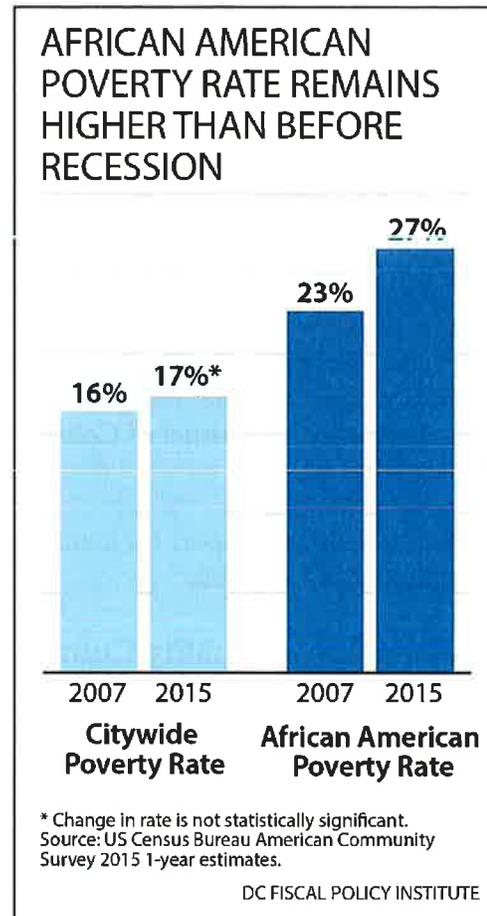
Black Residents Bear the Brunt of the City’s Persistent Poverty: Some 27 percent of the city’s Black population lived in poverty in 2015, up from 23 percent in 2007. And nearly three-quarters of all District residents who live in poverty are Black.⁶

Very High Child Poverty: Poverty is especially high among children, particularly east of the Anacostia River. Half of children east of the river lived in poverty in 2014.⁷

Paid family leave and fair scheduling legislation can help address DC’s wide income inequality and keep more families from falling into poverty.

Paid Family and Medical Leave

Paid family leave helps workers care for themselves and their family at important moments, while keeping their job and maintaining economic stability. The program will be especially helpful for the city’s most vulnerable workers who often struggle to get back in the job market after a job loss. In addition, promoting family economic stability is important to the city’s future. More specifically:



³ Marianne Bertrand & Sendhil Mullainathan. 2003. “Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination.” NBER Working Paper No. 9873.

⁴ DC Fiscal Policy Institute, [While DC Continues to Recover from Recession, Communities of Color Continue to Face Challenges](#). September 18, 2015.

⁵ DC Fiscal Policy Institute, [Two Paths to Better Jobs for DC Residents: Improved Training and Stronger Job Protections](#). October 15, 2015.

⁶ DC Fiscal Policy Institute, [DC’s Racial Inequality Continues to Widen, Even as the City Sees Substantial Economic Growth](#), September 15, 2016.

⁷ DC Fiscal Policy Institute, [While DC Continues to Recover from the Recession, Communities of Color Continue to Face Challenges](#), September 18, 2015.

- Some 64,800 of DC's low-wage workers – 38,200 of them women – would benefit from paid family leave.⁸
- DC has the highest infant mortality rate among OECD country capital cities, at 6.6 deaths per 1,000 births. Because paid family leave is associated with better maternal and infant health, a paid leave program could decrease infant mortality by 16 percent.⁹
- Because families who take paid parental leave are 9 percent less likely to use public assistance (food stamps and/or cash assistance),¹⁰ in DC, there would be 2,400 fewer families who received food stamps and/or cash assistance at any time during a leave.¹¹
- Workers re-entering the labor force are 9 percent more likely to return to the same employer if the leave was paid than if it was unpaid.¹² In DC, access to paid family leave would increase the number of workers returning to the same employer after leave by 7,200.¹³

For these reasons, the DC Council should adopt the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

Fair Scheduling

Legislation that was recently tabled would require large retail and restaurant employers to offer additional hours to current employees first, before they look for a new hire. It also would ensure that employees get advance notice of their schedules. Encouraging and enforcing these stable work scheduling practices will help many hard-working DC residents provide for their families and continue the education that they need to advance their careers.

DCFPI analysis finds that fair scheduling legislation stands to help improve the lives of some 22,000 low-wage District residents. (See Table 1.)

⁸ National Compensation Survey, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015.

⁹ Reduction to 5.5 deaths per 1,000 DCFPI estimate based on:

- DC infant mortality rate: Save the Children, "State of the World's Mothers 2015: The Urban Disadvantage," May 2015.
 - Estimated decrease in infant mortality rate with each additional week of paid family leave: Jody Heymann, Amy Raub, and Alison Earle, "Creating and Using New Data Sources to Analyze the Relationship Between Social Policy and Global Health: The Case of Maternal Leave," Public Health Reports, Vol. 126.3, Sep. 2011.

¹⁰ Arindrajit Dube and Ethan Kaplan, "Paid Family Leave in California: An Analysis of Costs and Benefits," Labor Project for Working Families, Jun. 2002.

¹¹ DCFPI estimate based on:

- Number of DC workers: State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates for the District of Columbia, US Department of Labor, May 2014.
 - Percent of US workers who take unpaid family leave in a given year: Arindrajit Dube and Ethan Kaplan, "Paid Family Leave in California: An Analysis of Costs and Benefits," Labor Project for Working Families, Jun. 2002.
 - Regression-adjusted differential probability of US worker receiving public assistance at any time while on leave (paid - unpaid leave): Arindrajit Dube and Ethan Kaplan, "Paid Family Leave in California: An Analysis of Costs and Benefits," Labor Project for Working Families, Jun. 2002.

¹² Arindrajit Dube and Ethan Kaplan, "Paid Family Leave in California: An Analysis of Costs and Benefits," Labor Project for Working Families, Jun. 2002.

¹³ DCFPI estimate based on:

- Regression-adjusted differential probability of return (paid - unpaid leave): Arindrajit Dube and Ethan Kaplan, "Paid Family Leave in California: An Analysis of Costs and Benefits," Labor Project for Working Families, Jun. 2002.
 - Percent of US workers who took leave in past 12 months: Abt Associates for US Department of Labor, "Family and Medical Leave in 2012: Technical Report," Apr. 2014.
 - Percent of US workers with access to paid family leave: National Compensation Survey, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015.
 - Number of DC workers: State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates for the District of Columbia, US Department of Labor, May 2014.

Table 1. Estimated Number of Workers Affected by Fair Scheduling Legislation, by Ward¹⁴	
Area	Number of workers
Mostly upper Northwest (Ward 3)	2,138
Mostly Ward 4, some of Ward 1 & 5	7,077
Wards 5 & 6	3,155
Wards 7 & 8	4,001
Downtown Core (Ward 1 & 2, some 6)	5,885
Total	22,256

A 2015 report by DC Jobs with Justice, the DC Fiscal Policy Institute, and the Georgetown University Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working poor surveyed 436 non-supervisory hourly employees in service-sector retail and food service companies in the District.¹⁵ We found that these workers typically earn around \$10 an hour, and work 32 hours per week, for an annual income of less than \$17,000.¹⁶ Yet most of these workers are adults trying to support themselves and their families. Given this, it is perhaps not surprising that nearly all of these workers said it was important to receive more hours at their primary job.

Beyond low-wages and hours, many service sector workers find their schedules changed by their employer from week to week, often with little notice, leaving their incomes to fluctuate while their rent, food, and other bills stay the same. Our survey found that nearly half of workers receive their work schedules less than a week in advance. For the typical worker, work hours in a given week varies anywhere from 25 to 38 hours per week, creating uneven and unpredictable incomes.

Almost one-third of these workers with children under 13 reported that their work schedules negatively impacted childcare arrangements, sometimes forcing them to leave their children in less than desirable situations. Unstable or sub-par childcare can have serious consequences for childhood development.¹⁷

Also, one of eight workers we surveyed said their work schedules made it impossible to attend classes or job training. Scheduling practices contribute to a vicious cycle where employees are trapped in the low-wage jobs they want to leave by the demands of those very same low-wage jobs.

For these reasons, in the new legislative session in January, the City Council should quickly re-introduce and pass the Hours and Scheduling Stability Act of 2015.

¹⁴ DCFPI analysis of ACS 3 year data for 2011-13, person file. Data covers two different reporting periods so PUMA location is not exact, but very close. The PUMA boundaries shifted slightly during reporting. Retail and restaurant locations with 20 or more employees are used as a proxy for large employers with 40 or more locations nationwide.

¹⁵ DC Jobs With Justice, DC Fiscal Policy Institute, and Georgetown University Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor, *Unpredictable, Unsustainable: The Impact of Employers' Scheduling Practices in DC*. June 2015.

¹⁶ At the time this survey was conducted, DC's minimum wage was \$9.50 per hour. Therefore, most of these workers are likely earning a bit more now, but are probably still relatively close to the current minimum wage of \$11.50 per hour.

¹⁷ "The Long Reach of Early Childhood Poverty." Greg Duncan & Katherine Magnuson, *Pathways*, Winter 2011.

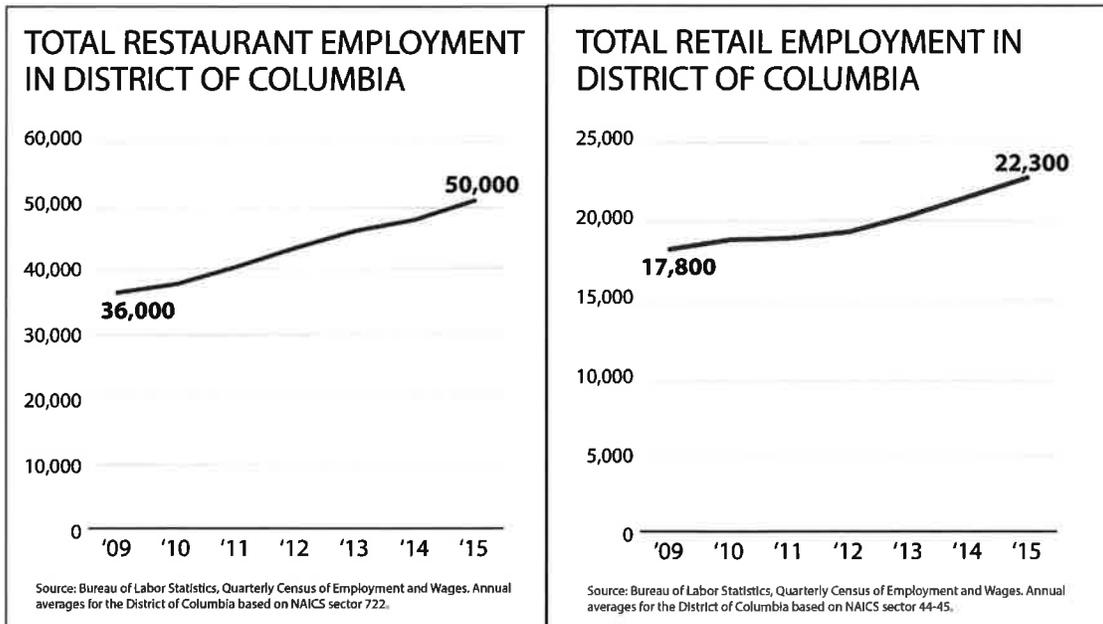
DC's Economy Is Strong Enough to Absorb Universal Paid Leave and Fair Scheduling

Universal paid leave would cost just 1% of pay to employers. Economists generally agree that most workers will absorb this cost themselves, through a slightly lower starting salary at a new job, or slightly lower wage increases at an existing job.

Businesses that employ many workers at the minimum wage—such as the retail and restaurant industries—will have to absorb more of the cost of paid leave at the outset. And, these are the industries affected by the fair scheduling legislation. Yet universal paid leave will have a very low cost for these employers—at 40 hours per week, universal paid leave will only cost about \$240 per employee.¹⁸ And fair scheduling does not necessitate higher compensation costs at all, as long as employers abide by the advance notice requirement.

Also, the good news is that DC's retail and restaurant sectors have been booming in recent years in the District. For example:

- Over the past three years, retail and food services accounted for more than one-third of new jobs in DC.¹⁹ Both of these sectors have seen steady employment increases since 2009.²⁰
- From August 2015 to August 2016, retail trade employment grew 7.6 percent—a faster rate than any other sector. Food service jobs increased by an impressive 3.5 percent.²¹



¹⁸ \$11.50 per hour x 2,080 hours per year x 1% = \$239.20

¹⁹ DC OCFO. June 2016. "Office of the Chief Financial Officer's April 2016 Review of District of Columbia Economic and Revenue Trends."

²⁰ Bureau of Labor Statistics. Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Annual averages for the District of Columbia based on NAICS sectors 722 and 44-45, 2009-2015.

²¹ Based on a 12-month rolling average. DC OCFO. September 2016. "District of Columbia Economic and Revenue Trends: September 2016."

In addition, the District is generally more able to absorb these changes to its retail and restaurant industries than other locations may be, because these industries are less price sensitive due to the city's robust tourism industry.²² In other words, consumers will still come to eat and shop in the District even if large chains are required to offer their workers fair scheduling practices.

All of this suggests that DC's economy can remain robust while also providing universal paid leave and fair scheduling practices for its workers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today; I look forward to answering your questions.

²² David Cooper. "Evaluating Current & Proposed Labor Standards in DC." Presentation for the Working Group on Jobs, Wages, and Benefits. October 14, 2016.

MomsRising.org

November 19, 2016

Testimony from Dr. Sanjeev Sriram Working Group on Jobs, Wages, and Benefits

My name is Dr. Sanjeev Sriram. I live in Ward 6 and I've been a pediatrician here in Anacostia for over 6 years. I'm here to voice my strong support for the Universal Paid Leave Act.

Passing this bill with 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave will boost the health and economic security of all working families but especially of those resilient families I serve in Southeast DC.

I call on each member of this working group, the DC Council, and Mayor Bowser to support universal paid leave insurance. DC has the highest infant mortality rate of all capital cities in the developed world [1] and studies show that paid leave reduces infant mortality rates. [2]

The moral and health benefits don't stop there. In California, where a statewide paid leave program was instituted in 2004, mothers who use the program are more likely to initiate breastfeeding and to continue breastfeeding for approximately twice as long as mothers who do not use the program. [3] Breastfeeding has myriad lifelong benefits for moms and babies, so it is no wonder the DC Department of Health has sponsored ads encouraging local moms and their partners to breastfeed their newborns. [4] However, when 25% of new moms return to work in two weeks because they don't have the financial resources to be home caring for a new baby, these moms are rarely able to initiate breastfeeding and are hardly ever able to follow through with breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months of a baby's life. [5] We need policy solutions that actually enable my patients to follow the best practice medical advice I give without them risking their financial security.

The paid medical leave component of this legislation is just as important as the paid parental leave component. When a patient in my hospital receives the devastating news of a cancer diagnosis, they should be able to take time away from work for treatment, without risking being able to put food on the table for their family or, worse, losing their housing altogether.

Likewise, parents should be able to care for children with serious illnesses without falling into – or farther into poverty. Studies show that sick children recover faster when cared for by their parents. The presence of a parent shortens a child's hospital stay by 31 percent! [6]

For the health, dignity, and prosperity of DC families, let's lead on leave. I am counting on this body to recommend passage and swift implementation of the Universal Paid Leave Act.

[1] **Save The Children: “Among 25 Wealthy Capital Cities, Washington D.C. Has Highest Infant Mortality Rate Despite City's Recent Progress in Reducing the Death Rate”**

<http://www.savethechildren.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=8rKLIXMGIpI4E&b=9241341&ct=14645193¬oc=1>

[2] **Department of Health Services, School of Public Health, University of Washington: “Population Health and Paid Parental Leave: What the United States Can Learn from Two Decades of Research”**

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4934583/>

[3] **Center for Economic and Policy Research: “Leaves That Pay: Employer and Worker Experiences With Paid Family Leave in California”** <http://cepr.net/publications/reports/leaves-that-pay>

[4] **Pregnancy and Baby: “Breastfeeding benefits both mother and child”**

<http://www.pregnancyandbaby.com/baby/articles/944153/breastfeeding-benefits-both-mother-and-child>

[5] **In These Times: “The Real War on Families: Why the US Needs Paid Leave Now”**

<http://inthesetimes.com/article/18151/the-real-war-on-families>

[6] **Heymann, J. (2001). The Widening Gap: Why America's Working Families Are in Jeopardy - and What Can Be Done About It. New York, NY: Basic Books**

Testimony in Support of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015
Testimony of Julie Yoder

First, I would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to share my story. My name is Julie Yoder and I live in Petworth, in Ward 4. I am the founder and owner of a customized English language tutoring business called The English Teacher Collective, and I am also a co-founder of the nonprofit youth empowerment program Girls Rock! DC. I have been self-employed since 2007 and incorporated with a business since 2009. I employ one to four contractors on both a full and part time basis. I am here today to urge city officials to pass a well-crafted Paid Family Leave bill. From my observation the obvious benefits to small business owners themselves, rather than just their employees, have been glossed over in the ongoing conversation.

I have tried to provide protection for myself and my contractors through the current private disability insurance market and I am here to tell you that it does not work. In 2013 I purchased Guardian's seemingly affordable disability insurance plan for myself and my full time contractor, as it was the only available option for a company our size. I felt good that I was able to provide that sense of security for myself and the person working for me, but it turned out to be nightmare when I actually needed it.

In Spring of 2014 I developed shingles and I was too ill to work for nearly two months. I lost about \$6,000 in income during my sick period. I didn't have enough salary to meet basic monthly expenses and I had to borrow from my domestic partner and set up an income tax payment plan with the IRS as a result. I had already taken too much from my savings to make ends meet. I don't know what I would have done if I had not had a partner who was able to help me.

I later submitted a claim to the insurance company. Shingles, a serious virus, should have been a clear cut claim. Instead I unsuccessfully battled the insurance company for 9 months, producing piles of evidence and paperwork for them, and in the end they denied the claim because I had seen a CVS minute clinic nurse after hours instead of my regular doctor and because I admitted to working the equivalent of about 3 days during my illness to keep the business going and manage my contractors. Guardian's nurse investigator treated me like a criminal. I was asked to produce three years' worth of tax statements and profit/loss statements for the business before they would even consider the claim. Then I was asked why I had not kept a time sheet on my own working hours for every day of the year - a ridiculous request for a small business owner - and why I had gone to an after hours clinic. There was a clear incentive to find any reason possible to not honor their contract. I cancelled the policy and accepted that if I get sick again I would just have to give up the successful business I had built and try to get hired by an institution that provides benefits. I have a common autoimmune disease, so this is a real fear. The private for-profit insurance market DOES NOT WORK and is incentivized to scam businesses and self-employed people.

The premiums of the disability policy were about 2.5% of my income at the time and turned out to be a total waste of money. I estimate that the 9 months I spent gathering documentation and being on the phone with the insurance company during working hours is equivalent to at least

\$4,000 worth of otherwise billable hours. My lost income during illness was at least \$6,000. So in 2014, including health care expenses, I took a hit of about \$12,000 for contracting shingles and got none of it back. How many of you could absorb an unexpected expense like that? Compared to this, I am thrilled by the idea of paying only 1% or less of my annual income into a public paid leave program. If a public family or illness leave program had been in place I would not have been forced to suffer in this way. I and all the other entrepreneurs in DC deserve a better trade-off for our contributions to the DC economy. No job provider should be forced to borrow money, beg relatives, or shut down her business in response to a very normal life event.

Additionally, I am 44 years old and still hope to pursue my dream of having a family. But taking time off to have or adopt a baby with no paid leave would put my household into financial peril. Other people with my autoimmune condition qualify for disability benefits, and in my most anxious moments, usually when I am experiencing a non-paid sick day, I think about whether it would be easier to just give up working altogether and apply for government assistance. My earlier career (with benefits) ended because of a health crisis. Against all health odds, I managed to build a business that provides income for myself and others and I did it in DC because I want to stay here. But if a paid public leave program were to pass in VA or MD, I would move there immediately to avoid living with the constant threat losing everything I have built. Thank you.

Testimony of Nikki D'Angelo Petty
Working Group on Jobs, Wages, and Benefits
November 19, 2016

Thank you for giving me the chance to testify today. My name is Nikki D'Angelo Petty and I am a new mom to Mochara, an eight-month old baby boy. With my testimony today, I want to give you a glimpse into the beauty and struggle of being a new parent to help you make a decision about paid family leave access in our city.

DC is where my husband and I began our teaching careers and made our home. After finding out I was pregnant, I told my employer almost immediately and began the planning for having a baby. I imagined, in a female dominated social service field that I would have some of the best maternity leave options available. And I know as middle-class folks we have it pretty good in general. However, what I did get wasn't enough after experiencing the reality of what it's like to give birth and have a newborn and thinking about what other mothers don't get breaks my heart. But I find hope in a bill that gives credit to the awesome responsibility of being a parent in those early weeks and months.

I knew that depending on how I gave birth, I would get 6 or 8 weeks at 60% pay. My husband got 2 weeks at 60% pay, with 1 week of sick leave and 1 week of spring break. I knew that I would want to take the option of unpaid leave under FMLA so that I could spend more than 6 or 8 weeks bonding with my newborn baby. I can't recall how many times we sat down together, looking at the calendar, when each pay day would come and how our bank account would look. On more than one occasion, my husband would take a deep breath and say to me: "are you sure we can afford this?". It turns out we made the right decision for us emotionally but not financially. We had only able to save a few thousand dollars ahead of time, which ran out quickly and have racked up a decent amount of credit card debt.

I was in labor for 49 hours, which ended in a c-section. My husband, who was my birth coach, and I were traumatized after the whole process. We spent a few days in the tiny hospital room crying tears of joy at the sight of our little boy and just crying because of everything we had just been through. To heal from the c-section, I was instructed by my doctor to not go up and down the stairs OR simply carry my baby for 4 weeks. It took me 12 weeks of full rest to feel like myself again and I can't even think about what I would have done if I didn't have my husband AND my parents helping.

My husband was devastated when he had to go back to work - at 4 weeks, a baby is learning how to breastfeed, how to sleep, it's fists don't ever really open and being on their stomach for a few minutes is a huge deal. At 12 weeks a baby is making some cooing sounds, grabbing and holding onto objects (and mommy's hair) and finally able to give you a few smiles that don't

have anything to do with gas or a bowel movement. Newborn development is incredible but slow – they need a lot of attention and its hard work.

I ended up leaving my teaching job for a new opportunity but I knew I couldn't field the demands of teaching and dedicate myself to my baby the way I wanted to. I started a new job when Mochara was 6 months old and I wish our financial situation improved with finally having 2 solid incomes but daycare costs \$2000 a month and with the high cost of living in this city and paying off our debt, I don't know how much longer we can afford to live here.

Being a new parent is incredible - the beauty and love we have felt is hard to put into words but the stress of work and finances have been a major weight on our young family. I am hoping that you all will commit to supporting a Paid Family Leave bill that would give all families a shot at simply being there to experience all that beauty and love and not going into debt trying to do it. That bill is the Universal Paid Leave Act. Thank you



**Testimony of Laura Brown
regarding the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015**

**Before the Mayor's Working Group on Jobs, Wages and Benefits
November 19, 2016**

Good afternoon, my name is Laura Brown, resident of Ward 6 and Executive Director of First Shift Justice Project, providing legal services to low-income pregnant women in the District. I will address the effect of the proposed paid leave insurance program on the D.C. employees I work with.

Two-thirds of the low-income working families in D.C. depend on the income of a single breadwinning mother. These moms are our clients and almost none of them have paid leave – not even one week. When they give birth, their family income is not decreased – it is non-existent.

The economic consequences of taking unpaid time off after childbirth are clear: no rent payments; no groceries; no bus fare; no diapers. Low-income workers do not earn enough to have savings and generally cannot rely on family to pay their expenses.

So why not just go back to work? Conversations about paid leave rarely address the physical reality of childbirth and its after effects. I have two kids and when I was a new mother myself, I expected the physical exhaustion and

sleep deprivation. After I gave birth I found myself going back to my pregnancy books, wondering how I missed the part about the stitches in my perineal area to repair the tearing when the baby's head emerged; the bleeding; the constipation combined with incontinence (yes, both at the same time); hemorrhoids; the pain and leaking of my breasts; and the excruciating postnatal contractions in my abdomen. The after-effects of surgery for women who give birth by c-section are even worse, involving more stitches and a higher risk of infection.

My experience is typical, according to a 2012 study done in which 2400 new mothers were surveyed about health concerns after childbirth. The study is cited in my written testimony. (*See* [http://transform.childbirthconnection.org/reports/listeningtomothers/healthconcerns/.](http://transform.childbirthconnection.org/reports/listeningtomothers/healthconcerns/))

D.C. workers are entitled to unpaid leave to recover from childbirth under the Protecting Pregnant Workers' Fairness Act. This is a critical protection and some of my clients decide to take the time their medical providers recommend, unpaid. They negotiate with their landlords, apply for public benefits, and summon whatever resources they can find to get by.

Others go back to work before they are ready and hope that their health is not compromised and that they aren't fired for poor job performance.

Esmeralda - a First Shift client, Ward 4 resident, and single mom - returned to her job yesterday, only one month after giving birth. Like many low-income jobs, her job in the kitchen of a catering company is physically demanding, involving standing for long periods of time and heavy lifting. Because she is returning to work so soon, her risk of infection is higher and her recovery from childbirth is likely to take longer. Returning to work too early is also associated with a higher incidence of postpartum depression.

Whatever women prioritize - their financial well-being or their physical well-being - it is a crappy choice and they should not have to make it. It is simply inhumane to force a woman to return to work before she has had time to recover from the trauma of childbirth. For these single mothers, providing paid leave is not a "benefit;" it is what women should be entitled to as human beings. Thank you.

Working Group on Jobs, Wages, and Benefits
Testimony in support of Paid Family Leave
Statement of Jeremiah Lowery

November 19th, 2016

Working group members, good afternoon. I am Jeremiah Lowery, a Ward 4 Resident, and I am testifying in favor of the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015, which I understand you are considering as one of many policies to make DC more competitive and more just.

Let me start by thanking you for having this hearing. I am the Ombudsman for D.C for Democracy and I will be speaking on behalf the organization today. DC for Democracy is a progressive, all-volunteer community organization with members in every ward of our city.

This afternoon I want to speak briefly about my personal and professional reasons for supporting this bill.

A few years ago my mother had a liver infection and she was hospitalized for 3 months, and then needed at least another month to recover at home. Luckily her company offered paid leave and she was able to return to work after her recovery. Without this program, she would have had to leave her job and would have been on the brink of homelessness. My mother's story is just like that of many other D.C. residents, except most don't have access to a strong paid leave program. Every D.C. resident should be afforded the same opportunity as my mother and they should not have to choose between their health or staying on a job to keep food in their mouths or avoiding homelessness.

On a professional level I was the Research and Policy Coordinator at Restaurant Opportunities Center D.C. from 2013-2015, where I organized food service workers to fight for paid sick days, equal pay, and better working conditions. I heard the stories of hundreds of food service workers in D.C. - stories that included having to choose between caring for a child with a serious, long illness or staying on the job, or having to choose to stay in DC, where it has become unaffordable

to raise a family, or move to another state that offers better benefits. We have the power to keep families in D.C. - let's make sure they never have to make the decision of choosing between care for a child or a job.

I understand your job as a working group is to dig into the problems our city faces and suggest policy solutions. Never has such a complicated task been so simple: we need paid leave, and we can pass the Universal Paid Leave Act.

We appreciate the 12 weeks this bill provides as of now, because people with an illness like my mom's who need at least that much. DC for Democracy acknowledges the challenge this working group and the Council face because of the uncertainties regarding the fiscal impact of this program. One way to deal with those uncertainties is to include in the legislation an automatic trigger mechanism to include the original provisions as extra funds are available. The Council can establish a prioritized list of provisions, beginning with the 16 weeks of paid leave and 100% of wage replacement.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Testimony of Kristin Garrity Sekerci

Ward 1 Resident

Public Hearing on Jobs, Wages, and Benefits

November 19, 2016

My name is Kristin Garrity Sekerci and I am a Ward 1 resident. I live on 16th Street NW on the border of the Mount Pleasant and Columbia Heights neighborhoods. I am a volunteer leader with Jews United for Justice on the Paid Family and Medical Leave Campaign, and this is why.

I would first like to speak on behalf of my husband, Selim Sekerci, who is a co-owner of Angelico La Pizzeria, a small business located in Mt. Pleasant. Angelico Pizzeria is a franchise with four locations across DC. It is also a signatory to the Paid Leave Business Coalition. As a small business owner, my husband supports the Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015.

Now let's be honest – high turnover rates are already the nature of restaurant businesses. Hours are long, wages minimum and benefits nil. This puts a burden on employers to maintain an effectively trained team of cooks, drivers, dispatchers, dishwashers, servers and shift managers. When life happens and one of these critical members of the team needs to take a leave of absence, employers find themselves between a rock and a hard place. Not to mention, of course, the employee!

The Universal Paid Leave Act of 2015 would allow employees to take leave while still accessing some or most of their wages through the insurance pool set up through the 1% payroll tax. No employer should want their employees to have to come back to work right after having a baby, or right after they've been in a serious car accident, or while they're in the process of caregiving for their dying parents.

The sad thing is, this has become normalized – at best as a result of unaffordable private insurance plans that would break the bottom line of small businesses. At worst, as symptomatic of a business culture in which low-income families have no choice but to live paycheck to paycheck, work long if not multiple jobs, and just pray that life does not deal them medical catastrophes.

This is the reality that my husband has experienced as a small business employer in Washington, DC. In addition, it has also affected our family. When our son was born almost two years ago, I was working at a small non-profit in DC where I did not have access to leave – paid or otherwise. My boss was totally understanding and offered to hold my position, but to return to work after a few weeks without pay and to find childcare for my son on that salary would have been financially unsustainable. As a result, I quit my job and stayed home with him for his first

year. That was hard for me and for my employer. Staying home, though, was not without its financial burdens. In fact, my family is still making up for lost savings. Our story is not a remarkable one, but it is an all-too common one.

I ask the members of this task force to please help D.C. residents, employees and employers avoid having to make these difficult and frankly unfair choices. It keeps us from thriving and fully contributing to the D.C. economy and workforce. It also keeps us from staying.

Thank you.

Testimony for Paid Family Leave

11.19.16

Sharon Rose Goldtzvik

Founder + CEO

Uprise – communications consulting for good guys

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Sharon Goldtzvik, I'm the founder and CEO of Uprise, a communications consulting practice for good guys. I want to talk about why paid family and medical leave for D.C. is more important than ever for small businesses like mine.

About a year and a half ago, I left my job -- and my benefits package -- to start my own practice. I love the feeling of being my own boss, growing a business and contributing to DC's vibrancy.

This is the third time I've spoken out in strong support of paid family leave for D.C: once when the bill was introduced, once at the public hearing in February, and again today.

That first time, my business was just starting, and I was worried about my own future. I was shocked to discover that there is no private market for family leave. At all. I realized we'd have to put starting a family on hold for a few years, at least, until we could save enough money to cobble together some kind of maternity leave.

The second time, six months into my new business, things were going even better than I expected and I had already begun to contemplate my first hire. I was doing the math, and thinking about how I could offer a good job with good wages and benefits.

Now, eight months later, I still haven't made that first hire. Without a citywide paid family and medical leave system that covers small businesses like mine, I'll have to spend months or even years building up a huge piggy bank to pay for that kind leave out of pocket.

I won't offer someone a job with a paycheck that will disappear if they have a baby or a sick family member. I just think that's wrong. It also puts me at a significant competitive disadvantage. Big companies know that providing generous family leave benefits helps them attract and keep top talent. How can I attract the talented people that will help grow my business if I can't afford to offer basic benefits like paid leave?

So, I would like to ask you today to please create the best plan for paid family leave for D.C. A one-percent increase to payroll tax that provides 16 weeks of paid leave is an incredibly good deal for small businesses like mine and for everyone who lives and works in the District. Please do not slash those benefits. We have no other way to provide them to our employees.

And we have no other way to access them ourselves. I am terrified of what may happen if I or any of my family gets sick and needs my care. I'm our family's breadwinner and there's no one else in my office to cover for me. Please make sure that the final version of the bill covers self-employed people and small business owners like me.

I know that you may be considering imposing the payroll tax we proposed for paid leave and using it to pay for other things. Yes, our city has many important needs. But this tax was created and designed to collect the funds we need to pay for this program. Other worthy projects can be paid for by other means.

One final note: I know we all may have thought that a national program for paid family and medical leave was on the horizon. I'm sure I don't have to remind you that the future we all thought was coming has radically changed. That makes it more important than ever that D.C. sets the bar, and proves to the rest of the country that good, meaningful paid family and medical leave can --and does -- work. We will all be the better for it.