



The Women's Foundation of Colorado
Testimony in support of
SB19-188 FAMILI Family Medical Leave Insurance Program
House Finance Committee
April 24, 2019

Thank you, Madame Chair and Committee Members, for your consideration of Senate Bill 188. I am Louise Myrland, Vice President of Programs for The Women's Foundation of Colorado, here to respectfully request your support of this bill to move our state closer to catalyzing economic growth by ensuring all workers access to paid leave.

The Women's Foundation of Colorado is committed to supporting women in achieving a livable wage by investing in research that addresses the root causes of poverty and identifying the greatest barriers to thriving. For over 30 years, we have closely tracked the indicators that research shows lead to economic security. We've learned from our research and directly from our grantees what it takes to thrive in our state. The barriers range from affordable child care to accessible transportation and safe housing. While many of these barriers are addressed regularly at the Colorado General Assembly, and for that we are thankful, we believe it is time for our state government to act to create a paid leave program. Despite Colorado's laudable inclusionary expansion of FMLA eligibility requirements, current policy still falls short because too many workers cannot afford to take unpaid leave to care for themselves or a loved one.

Our research in partnership with the Institute for Women's Policy Research shows that women are nearly half of all workers in Colorado (1,176,528), and nearly two-thirds of women in the state are in the workforce (1,289,977).ⁱ In nearly half of Colorado households with children, women are breadwinners,ⁱⁱ but families headed by single mothers have the lowest median annual income of all family types at \$30,235. This amount falls well below the Self-Sufficiency Standard, or the amount required to meet families' basic needs.ⁱⁱⁱ Women comprise more than 50 percent of the workforce in Colorado's lowest paid jobs.^{iv} With paid leave available to only 5 percent of workers in the bottom quarter by wages^v, too many women are forced to choose between caring for a loved one or working to support them.

Catalyzing community to advance and accelerate economic opportunities for women and their families

The economic benefits of women's access to paid leave extend beyond the pay they receive during the leave period. For example, on the individual level, research indicates that access to paid family and medical leave increases the probability that women continue working after having a child^{vi} and that women who utilized paid leave were more likely to experience wage growth in the following year than those without access to paid leave.^{vii} Women and their families benefit from this continued earning and their job stability offers value to the employers who retain talent and reduce costly turnover. On the macro level, public paid leave programs have also been associated with job growth,^{viii} increased economic activity,^{ix} and increased labor force participation rates.^x

We know that the women of our state would be positively impacted by access to paid family and medical leave insurance. It would allow for one of many barriers to be reduced and the possibility of economic security to be enhanced. Every major economic power and industrialized nation other than the U.S. has embraced paid leave as a tool for nations to maximize economic growth with unemployment equal to or lower than that of the United States, for employers to remain competitive and profitable, and employees – especially women – to develop successful careers, respectfully care for their families, and ultimately achieve economic prosperity. Please support improved economic outcomes for Colorado women and families and our state economy by voting yes on Senate Bill 188 today. Thank you.

ⁱThe Status of Women & Girls in Colorado, Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2013. <https://wfco.org/pages/content/annual-research>

ⁱⁱ Institute for Women's Policy Research, Status of Women in the States: The Economic Status of Women in Colorado. <http://statusofwomendata.org/app/uploads/2015/10/R467.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-income-families.html>

^{iv} The Impact of a \$12.00 Minimum Wage in Colorado, Colorado Women's College Collaboratory of the University of Denver, 2016. <https://wfco.org/minimumwage>

^v The Key to Unlocking U.S. GDP Growth? Women, S&P Global, 2018.

https://www.spglobal.com/_Media/Documents/03651.00_Women_at_Work_Doc.8.5x11-R4.pdf

^{vi} Pay Matters: The Positive Economic Impacts of Paid Family Leave for Families, Businesses and the Public. Center for Women and Work, Rutgers University, 2012. <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/other/pay-matters.pdf>

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} Paid Sick Days Benefit Employers, Workers, and the Economy. Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2016.

<http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/paid-sick-days-benefit-employers-workers-and-the-economy>.

^{ix} Ibid.

^x The Key to Unlocking U.S. GDP Growth? Women, S&P Global, 2018.

https://www.spglobal.com/_Media/Documents/03651.00_Women_at_Work_Doc.8.5x11-R4.pdf

Good afternoon Mr. Chair. My name is Christine Foote-Lucero and I have been a registered nurse in critical care for seventeen years. In addition, I have worked as a forensic nurse for the past ten years.

I am writing you today, representing myself, in support of The Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act (FAMLI). As a forensic nurse, I regularly care for victims of violent crime, such as sexual assault and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). Part of my job as a registered nurse is to stay current with evidence based literature, which informs my practice.

The United States has a very serious IPV problem. On average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. Over the course of one year, this equates to more than 10 million women and men. IPV is an issue affecting people of all ages, races, genders, and sexual orientations. Compared with their non-abused peers, victims of IPV are at higher risk of health problems, including gynecological dysfunction (such as pelvic pain), sexually transmitted infections, gastrointestinal problems, chronic pain, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

In addition, IPV, sexual assault, and stalking have profound economic effects on victims and survivors. Multiple research studies have addressed the economic consequences and costs of IPV, sexual assault, and stalking for victims and survivors. The costs highlighted include medical expenditures, lower wages resulting from diminished educational attainment, lost wages from missed work and job loss, debt and poor credit, and costs associated with housing instability. In 2003, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that victims of IPV lose a total of nearly eight million days of paid work, the equivalent of more than 32,000 full-time jobs. That number has only undoubtedly risen. Analysis of the National Violence Against Women's Study (NVAWS) data found that victims of IPV who were stalked lost an average of 10.1 days of paid work per year; those who were raped lost an average of 8.1 days per year; and those who experienced physical violence lost 7.2 days per year. Reduced work hours and lower educational attainment lead to significant income losses for those experiencing IPV. Some need time off to seek medical attention, secure a restraining order, or relocate to a safe place. Others are prevented from getting to work when an abuser disables or takes the car, sabotages childcare arrangements, or leaves the victim without cash to use public transportation.

Offering paid "safe leave" gives employees the time to meet with a lawyer, seek a protective order, attend court hearings, utilize counseling services, seek shelter, care for their children, or possibly relocate. It is imperative that policymakers have a more complete understanding of the costs of abuse in order to provide appropriate responses and remedies so that survivors can break free, have a healthy recovery, and live full lives.

For these reasons, I support FAMLI and urge a "yes" vote from the committee. A list of my medical references have been provided.

References

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