

Testimony of Tori Snyder
House Ways & Means Committee Hearing
The Burnout Epidemic and What Working Women Need for a Stronger Economy
June 15, 2022

Good morning, Chairman Neal, Ranking Member Brady, and members of the committee. My name is Tori Snyder. I'm a single mom of a terrific four-and-a-half-year-old son, Braxton. We live in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with my mother, and we care for her mother (my grandmother), who lives at a personal care facility a few blocks from our home. I am a proud member of MomsRising.

I am a sandwich generation mom and a true single mother; I have sole physical and financial responsibility for my son. The pandemic has been really hard on my family, in considerable part because lawmakers have failed to ensure that working people can access paid leave, and because quality child care is hard to find and even harder to afford.

I worked in the film industry for years but just before the pandemic, I left because I was getting burned out by the long, unpredictable hours, which made it impossible for me to even take Braxton to pre-school and pick him up at the end of the day. I had lined up contract work for nonprofits as my new career. But then came COVID and I lost all my contracts and Braxton's child care program closed.

At that time, Braxton was being diagnosed; he is on the autism spectrum and has a sensory processing disorder. He needs several hours of occupational, speech and behavioral therapy each week. My grandma got COVID and spent months going in and out of the hospital. My mom also spent time in the hospital. She has dizziness that causes falls, and she broke both her arm and her foot as a result. I had no money coming in and couldn't even look for a job because there was no one to watch Braxton.

It was terrifying, and the postpartum anxiety I had developed after Braxton was born returned and worsened. We are covered by Pennsylvania's Medicaid program, but it doesn't cover my mental health, so I don't have coverage for therapy or help with my ADHD medicine.

During all this, I was trying to get my business going. My biggest fear, then and now, has been that I would get COVID. I can't get sick and I can't get hurt because if I do, I won't be able to work – and then what would happen to my family? I live in fear. I never take a day off because doing so would mean leaving money on the table.

Braxton's preschool did finally re-open. Having child care again was a blessing but it cost me \$800 per month – a huge amount of my take-home pay. Braxton finished up two years there last week, and now I am scraping together the money to cover his summer program at the Y.

I have started a business, Self-Care Seniorita, which offers presentations on self-care and productivity. I also work as a small business coach and DEI consultant. But it's an

understatement to say I'm stretched thin. I wish I had the money to pay for an occasional babysitter so I could better manage my responsibilities and care for myself too, but I don't have the budget for that. The Child Tax Credit was a huge help, but as you know, Congress ended the monthly payments.

Paid leave would make all the difference for my family. It would give me the peace of mind to know that we won't go broke – and lose our home – if I get sick or if I need to take time off to care for Braxton or my mom or grandma.

COVID left so many of us siloed. We're not sure who's vaccinated, so we're afraid to send our kids out or have people come into our homes. A lot of single moms are isolated and alone, trying to handle everything ourselves. We are burned out and exhausted, overworked and overtired. And we're struggling even more now because it's so expensive to feed our kids and put gas in our cars. With paid leave, I would know that if I have to take a day off, we won't go into debt.

I hope you will invest in the care infrastructure working families need, with paid leave for all, affordable child care, home- and community-based services, and coverage that addresses all our health care needs. Thank you.