

REMARKS OF THE HON. ROSA L. DELAURO
HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE: PAID FAMILY LEAVE
TUESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2020

Thank you, Chairman Richard Neal and Ranking Member Kevin Brady for welcoming me today, as well as the chair of the Worker and Family Support Subcommittee Congressman Danny Davis.

It is an honor to be here. The issue and the environment have collided. And, paid family leave is finally at the center of the discourse. The Ways and Means Committee has hosted one full committee hearing on paid leave, one subcommittee hearing, and now this one. Chairmen Neal and Davis have taken this issue to the forefront of the agenda for Ways and Means. And we are closer than ever to making this a reality for families

And none of this would be possible without the coalition led by the National Partnership for Women and Families. They have fought tooth and nail to bring this issue to the forefront, building on their legacy of securing the Family and Medical Leave Act, the

most consequential social policy enacted into law in the last 30 years.

The biggest economic challenge of our time is that people's pay is not keeping up with skyrocketing costs. Few can afford to lose several weeks' worth of wages, whether for an ill loved one or the birth of a child. It would push them over the edge.

Yet, few have the support they need, in the form of paid leave. In fact, fewer than 40 percent of working people have access to paid leave for a serious personal illness. Only 19 percent have access to paid leave to care for a family member.

And while more and more states, as well as private businesses, are implementing paid leave, it should not depend on your zip code. Paid leave is an economic necessity.

This is personal for me.

In 1986, I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. But, fortunately, my employer, Senator Chris Dodd, who introduced what became the Family and Medical Leave Act that same year, encouraged me to take all the time I needed. He told me: my job would be there waiting for me when I returned. With the support of my family and friends, by the grace of God and biomedical research, I recovered, and have now been cancer-free 30 years.

Then, two years ago, when my mother was dying, I got to be by her side. 6 weeks; every day. I could do so because no one told me as a Member of Congress that my job would not be waiting for me.

That was such a blessing that cannot just be for staffers or members of the Congress. The United States needs a national paid family leave policy.

So, after three years of careful deliberation and coalition building, I introduced the FAMILY Act with Senator Kirsten Gillibrand in 2013.

The FAMILY Act sets out the gold standard for paid leave for working people. It provides up to 12 weeks of partial wages to take time away to address a serious personal or family health issue, to care for a newborn or newly adopted child, or for circumstances arising from a loved one's military deployment or serious injury;

It is self-funded through payroll contributions from employers and employees of just two-tenths of 1% each (two cents per \$10 in wages).

It has a record 203 cosponsors in the House and 34 in the Senate. And, it is bipartisan. So were similar proposals in the states.

So far, nine states, including D.C., have passed paid leave programs. And, they go even further in terms of leave duration,

family members covered, wage replacement offered or employment protections. We can learn from those innovations.

And, we can learn from the businesses who support paid leave. From the Main Street Alliance to the American Sustainable Business Council, close to 100 businesses or business leaders support the FAMILY Act.

I am glad to see my colleagues on the other side of the aisle supporting paid leave in some form. But, this is important. Proposals that do harm should be unacceptable. And, many of those proposals as currently written will force workers to put their retirement in jeopardy by taking from Social Security. Income support only for new parents is not enough. 75 percent of workers who take FMLA currently do so to address the serious health condition of their own or a loved one.

Let us provide the paid leave that families and workers need and deserve. Celebrating middle-class families is not enough. We must be elevating them. We can with the FAMILY Act.