

Abby Pearson
Bath

Senator Craig Hickman, Representative Mike Sylvester, and distinguished members of the Committee on Labor and Housing:

My name is Abby Pearson, and I'm writing to urge you to support LD 1559: To Create the Commission To Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program; Sponsored by Senator Mattie Daughtry. This bill is a good first step toward creating a Paid Family & Medical Leave program.

I took medical leaves when each of my two kids was born that were paid in part by my employer and through my vacation time. My son, William, has Down syndrome. He was in the NICU for three weeks after he was born.

For both maternity leaves, I was paid for the first 6 weeks of leave by my employer. I managed to save enough vacation and sick time to receive pay for the final 6 weeks. While I stayed with my son in the hospital after he was born, my husband returned to work after he used up his two weeks of paid vacation time. In addition to two maternity leaves, I used FMLA again, unpaid, while William was an infant because I needed to take him to many medical appointments.

Having partial paid time off was a critical way for me to take care of my family. Many aren't so lucky. I know many families within the Down Syndrome community who have quit their jobs, lost their jobs or changed careers because they needed extra time to care for their family members.

Too many families have had to make sacrifices that they shouldn't have when it comes to caring for their loved ones. A statewide Paid Family & Medical Leave program is a necessary policy that allows families to thrive. I urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for your consideration,
Abby Pearson