



Testimony Re: Senate Bill 2737: Paid Leave

Senate Labor Committee

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT coordinates the Right from the Start Campaign, a state policy coalition led by eight organizations to advance state policies and budget priorities that help babies and young children get off to the right start.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and the Right from the Start Campaign would like to voice their strong support for Senate President Lawson's Paid Family Leave Bill, Senate Bill 2737. This bill would phase-in an increased in the number of weeks of paid family leave to reach the national benchmark of 12 weeks, would enable self-employed workers to buy into the program, and adds seriously ill grandchildren and a seriously ill person for whom the worker provides routine care and safety to the program.

The TCI program is essential support for new parents and their children in Rhode Island. It is also essential for workers with seriously ill family members of all ages. See the attached Fact Sheet which provides information at the city/town level about approved TCI claims.

Rhode Island has been a leader and was the third state in the U.S. to establish a paid family leave program (known as temporary caregiver insurance, or TCI). The General Assembly has steadily made progress in improving the program since it was established. In 2025, the General Assembly took important steps to address a long-standing problem by scheduling an increase in wage replacement rates for both TDI and TCI, which, at 60% of wages, have been the lowest among states that offer paid family and medical leave.

Rhode Island continues to have the lowest number of weeks of paid family leave among the states that offer leave (tied with California). Now, it is time to bring the number of weeks of TCI to the national standard of 12 weeks to align with a standard set in 1993 when the federal Family and Medical Leave Act was signed into law, allowing eligible employees nationwide to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave.

Nurturing, consistent relationships with parents are critical to a baby's early development, shaping the long-term architecture of the developing brain. Adequate paid family leave allows parents to establish nurturing relationships, improves maternal health and mental health, and has both short-term and long-term positive effects on outcomes for children.

We applaud the General Assembly's actions to increase the wage replacement rates, and we urge the General Assembly to take action to extend the program to the 12-week national

standard this session. We also very much support adding seriously ill grandchildren and “found family” to the program, and implementing an opt-in program for self-employed workers. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

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Paid Family Leave 2026

[H-7968](#) (Giraldo) & [S-2737](#) (Lawson)



Right from ti
Start

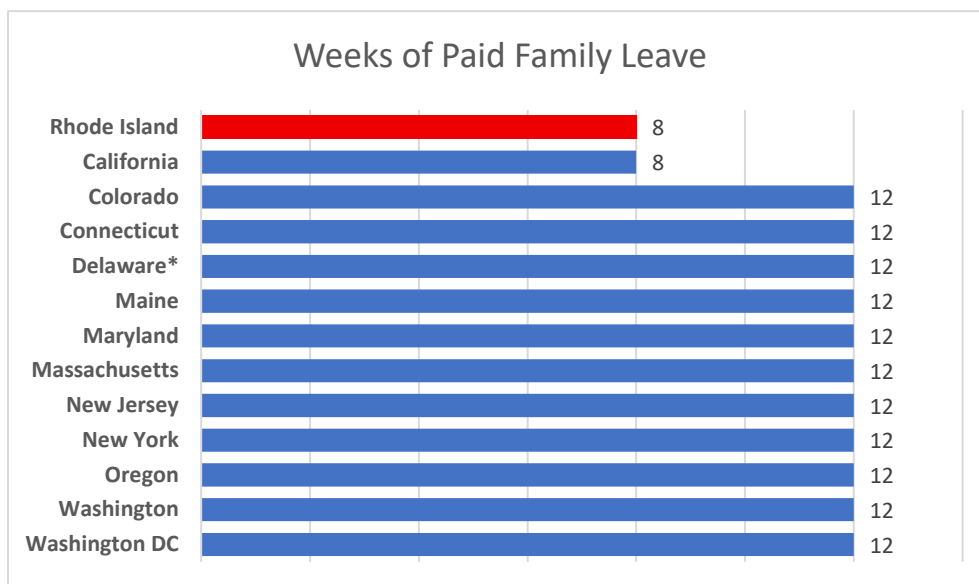
Since 2014, **Rhode Island has been a leader** in providing paid family leave for families with babies, newly adopted or foster children, and seriously ill family members through the Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI) program. One of only 13 state-based paid family leave programs, TCI currently provides up to eight weeks of partial (about 60%) wage replacement for workers who need to take time from their jobs to care for a new baby or seriously ill family member. In 2027, wage replacement rates will increase to 70% of regular wages and will increase to 75% in 2028.

In 2025, 79% (7,948) of approved TCI claims were to care for a new child, with 99% to care for a newborn and 1% to care for a newly adopted or foster child. Fifty-four percent of claims to care for a new child were filed by women and 46% were by men. **Over the past 11 years in Rhode Island, the gender gap has narrowed significantly for TCI claims to care for a new baby/child.** In 2014, there was a 36-point gap between men and women and in 2025 there was only a 9-point gap. [When fathers and non-birthing parents take time off to care for a new baby](#), maternal health and wellbeing improves, parental relationship conflict declines, parent-child attachment is strengthened, and [long-term patterns of positive parenting are established](#).

Legislation introduced in 2026 would:

- Increase the number of weeks of TCI leave to 10 weeks in 2027 and 12 weeks in 2028.
- Expand the definition of seriously family members to include grandchildren and people “for whom the employee is providing or arranging for health or safety related care.”
- Establish a new opportunity for self-employed workers to get TDI and TCI.

Rhode Island offers the shortest paid family leave among the states that offer paid family leave. Researchers and medical professionals recommend a minimum of 12 weeks for new parents.



Approved TDI Claims for Childbirth & TCI Claims, Rhode Island, 2025

City/Town	Pregnancy Complications and/or Recovery from Childbirth	Care for a New Baby/Child	Care for a Seriously Ill Family Member
Barrington	42	80	18
Bristol	46	89	28
Burrillville	31	53	43
Central Falls	53	95	34
Charlestown	33	56	22
Coventry	137	336	78
Cranston	314	705	201
Cumberland	116	242	69
East Greenwich	48	100	23
East Providence	153	306	95
Exeter	25	55	8
Foster	27	45	16
Gloucester	19	52	11
Hopkinton	27	55	19
Jamestown	12	25	5
Johnston	124	270	68
Lincoln	59	133	41
Little Compton	7	*	0
Middletown	33	57	6
Narragansett	14	35	6
Newport	48	71	19
New Shoreham	*	*	*
North Kingstown	90	201	45
North Providence	101	220	53
North Smithfield	33	52	17
Pawtucket	189	449	145
Portsmouth	40	101	11
Providence	744	1,198	263
Richmond	25	48	6
Scituate	53	133	25
Smithfield	51	135	42
South Kingstown	65	120	33
Tiverton	34	69	19
Warren	43	65	27
Warwick	311	693	161
Westerly	59	103	34
West Greenwich	17	48	12
West Warwick	128	290	92
Woonsocket	113	201	52
Out-of-State	432	938	217
TOTAL	3,900	7,948	2,065

* < 5 approved claims