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Testimony Re: H-7794 Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Temporary Disability Insurance Contributions
House Finance Committee
April 13, 2022
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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 will help families with young children.

Both Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and the Right from the Start Campaign strongly support H-7794, which would help improve the economic security of families by requiring employers to cover a portion of the cost of the Temporary Disabilities Insurance Program (TDI) and the Temporary Caregivers Insurance (TCI) Program, reducing the contributions workers are required to make through payroll withholding.

For decades, the **TDI program has been an essential support for pregnant workers who develop disabling complications** and enables them to follow doctors' orders to take time off from work with partial wage replacement. The TDI program also covers 6 to 8 weeks of **time off from work with wage replacement to recover from child birth**. In 2013, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supported the creation of the **TCI program which enables workers of all genders, and people who do not give birth to care for a new child joining a family through birth, adoption or foster care**.

Paid family and medical leave reduces infant mortality rates, improves breastfeeding rates and duration, and increases the likelihood that infants receive preventive medical care and immunizations. It also reduces maternal depression and child maltreatment.

Rhode Island is a leader in the U.S. as one of 10 states and the District of Columbia that has a state paid leave program. However, Rhode Island is in the minority as one of only 3 states that does not require that employers contribute to the insurance program. **Rhode Island should continue our leadership role in the U.S. by modernizing the financing of our TDI/TCI program and require employers to share costs with workers, thus improving the economic security of workers and families.**

In 2021, There were 7,031 approved claims for TCI during; 75% were to care for a new child and 25% were to care for a seriously ill family member. Pre-pandemic, 80% of approved claims were to care for a new baby or child. Of the 5,303 approved claims for to care for a new child, 44% were for dads and 56% were for moms. **Families from every city and town in Rhode Island benefit from the TDI/TCI programs which are an essential support for families with young children.**

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT thanks the General Assembly for your leadership in establishing the TDI and TCI programs and urges passage of this bill that would improve the economic security of families, increasing their take home pay, by sharing contributions to this program with employers.