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Chairman Mackenzie, Ranking Member Omar, and distinguished Members of the Workforce Protections Subcommittee, thank you for holding the Balancing Careers and Care: Examining Innovative Approaches to Paid Leave hearing on February 24, 2026.

I'm a mother of two daughters, and I was fortunate enough to have been provided paid leave when they were born. However, many American families have little to no access to paid family leave. This forces American families to make hard decisions like leaving the workforce early, with many never returning, but this does not have to be the case.

This is why Rep. Chrissy Houlahan and I have worked in a bipartisan manner to introduce federal framework for paid family leave. Our bill is simple; it establishes a competitive grant program to be run by the U.S. Department of Labor. Specifically, this would be a three-year pilot program that creates a competitive grant program for states to establish their own paid family leave initiatives that use a public-private partnership model. A state must also participate in the Interstate Paid Leave Action Network (I-PLAN) to be eligible for a grant under this program. The I-PLAN will act as a federal intermediary between states that would: 1) establish a set of best practices based on success in various states; 2) Allow for greater harmonization of benefits across the current patchwork of varying state thresholds and requirements and; 3) assist with deconfliction of benefits for those who live and work in different states, or those who move to a new state.

I want to be crystal clear – this bill is **NOT** a federal mandate for states. This bill provides states a federal framework should they adopt paid leave legislation and grants them access to federal dollars to help kickstart their own customized, state-driven plan.

As of 2022, the United States is one of only six COUNTRIES in the developed world without a national paid parental leave policy. A federal paid family leave framework will keep families healthy and financially secure, businesses will keep and retain workers along with reducing costs, states will see relief in budgets and save on public benefits, and lastly federal spending will decrease on social welfare programs.

The numbers back it up. According to a new report by Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality access to paid family leave is beneficial across income levels, women's participation in the workforce strengthens family economic security, and women with access to paid leave after birth or adoption are 93% more likely to remain in the workforce than those without. Paid family leave adds \$28.5 billion to family income annually and can generate savings by reducing state costs of other public benefits programs. Women who have access to paid leave

are nearly 40% less likely to seek assistance from SNAP or TANF after having received paid family leave when compared to women who did not have access.

Recent polling indicates this is not a fringe social issue, but rather an issue supported by 80% of the public including voters in both major parties and independents.

Put simply, paid family leave is pro-economy, pro-business, pro-employer, pro-employee, and most importantly pro-family. I want to thank the Chair, Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee for holding this important hearing on innovative approaches to paid leave.