

# **Labor and Public Employees Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT**

**Bill No.:** SB-1427

AN ACT EXPANDING PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE INSURANCE

**Title:** PROGRAM BENEFITS TO CERTAIN SCHOOL EMPLOYEES.

**Vote Date:** 3/20/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/4/2025

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Labor & Public Employees Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

The reason for this bill is to allow paraeducators and other non-certified school staff to participate in the Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) program. This would ensure that these staff are able to utilize the benefits of the program, which allows individuals to take paid leave for extended periods of time to care for their own health or that of a family member.

**The substitute language:** extends the job protection component of the CT Family & Medical Leave Act (CTFMLA) to these individuals, and makes conforming changes.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

None provided.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Ed Hawthorne, President, Connecticut AFL-CIO:** Mr. Hawthorne expressed his support for this bill and explained the intent of the Family and Medical Leave Act. He pointed out that because they only work ten months out of the year and do not work when school is not in session, non-certified school staffers often fall short of the 1,250-hour requirement to qualify for FMLA protections and leave provisions. This bill would ensure that those school employees have adequate workplace protections without burdening local Boards of Education with any expenses.

**Erin Choquette, Chief Executive Officer, Connecticut Paid Leave Authority:** Ms.

Choquette expressed her support for expanding paid family and medical leave to non-certified school employees. She provided a history on the Connecticut Paid Leave Act and corresponding Connecticut Paid Leave Authority, and she requested that the committee also allow the employees access to job protection measures under Connecticut General Statute 31-51kk.

**Shellye Davis, President, Hartford Paraeducators:** Ms. Davis expressed her support for this bill, stressing the importance of paraeducators and school-related personnel to students' success. She pointed out that without paid medical leave, these workers often have to return to work before they have fully recovered from illness, putting themselves, their coworkers, and the students at risk.

**Kate Dias, President, Connecticut Education Association:** Ms. Dias expressed her support for this bill and stressed the critical role that non-certified school staffers play in the state's schools. She pointed out that without paid leave, these essential workers must sacrifice their health and wellbeing – or that of a loved one – in order to keep their paychecks.

**James Demetriades, Lawyer, Connecticut AFT:** Mr. Demetriades expressed his support for this bill and his gratitude to paraprofessionals for all the work they do. He explained that despite their commitment to the educational system, paraprofessionals are some of the lowest paid workers in educational institutions. Because of their low salaries, many of them cannot afford to miss work due to illness, and they get ten paid sick and personal days on average in their contracts. He stressed that ensuring these essential workers have access to twelve weeks of paid family medical leave would secure a level of financial stability for some of the most essential workers in the school systems.

**Tonishia Signore, Policy Director, She Leads Justice:** Ms. Tonishia explained that She Leads Justice led the coalition for paid family and medical leave in Connecticut, and as such supports expanding it to non-certified school staffers.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Dr. Linda Dalessio:** Dr. Dalessio expressed her opposition to this bill.

**GENERAL COMMENTS:**

**Jennifer Jacobsen, Member, Fairfield Board of Education:** Ms. Jacobsen described a recently completed fiscal analysis of the bill by Fairfield's CFO, and stated that the Fairfield Board of Education does not have the budget to accommodate the paid leave expansion set forth in this bill. She noted that between increased administrative costs and staffing needs, she anticipated that this bill would cost the Fairfield school district \$250,000 to \$500,000 annually, and she went on to note that the bill could lead to a statewide budget impact of over \$20 million annually.

**Reported by: Sam Sims**

**Date: 4/2/2025**