To: House Labor Committee

Re: Testimony in support of H-5781

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The Economic Progress Institute writes in support of Whip Kazarian’s bill (H-5781) to make improvements to the Temporary Caregiver’s Insurance (TCI) program.

One of only 11 state-based paid leave programs, TCI provides up to six weeks of partial (about 60%) wage replacement for workers who need to take time from their jobs to care for a new child or seriously ill family member.

While Rhode Island was a leader in becoming the third state in the nation to enact paid family leave in 2013, now a decade later, our program lags behind those in other states.

1) **Rhode Island offers the shortest Paid Family Leave in U.S.**

![RI offers shortest Paid Leave program in the U.S.](image)

Rhode Island’s TCI provides a maximum of 6 weeks of paid leave. This is the shortest length of any Paid Family Leave policy in the country. Rhode Island’s 6 weeks of paid leave do not meet public health and medical guidelines for new parents and many other caregiving needs. Whip Kazarian’s bill will improve the program by doubling the maximum number of caregiving weeks to 12 weeks, which will match the national standard that has been set by other states.
2) **The need for an inclusive family definition**

Whip Kazarian’s bill will also allow for Rhode Islanders to utilize TCI to take care of a seriously ill sibling, grandchild, or a care recipient. Care recipients could include extended family members and other non-familial dependents not currently covered under TCI.

This inclusive family definition has already been implemented with the Healthy and Safe Families and Workplace Act, passed in 2018, which provides employees with paid safe and sick days. Neighboring states, MA and CT, already include siblings and grandchildren as eligible family members covered by their Paid Leave policies.

3) **Rhode Island’s Wage Replacement is the Lowest in U.S.**

Rhode Island’s TCI wage replacement is currently at 60%. This wage replacement is the lowest amongst all Paid Family Leave policies in the country. This wage replacement especially disadvantages low wage workers, who simply cannot afford to take TCI and thus do not benefit from the program.

Rep Kazarian’s bill addresses the inequity in the wage replacement by increasing the weekly dependent allowance from $10 to $20. This will moderately help working class families but not as significantly as increasing the wage replacement itself. We encourage the committee to consider increasing the wage replacement for all workers or consider a progressive wage replacement that would proportionately benefit low-wage workers more, as proposed in legislation by Representative Diaz’s bill H-5447.