



**Testimony Before the Senate Human Services Committee  
In Support of Paid Family & Medical Leave (SF2)  
Submitted by Paurvi Bhatt, MPH  
February 20, 2023**

My name is Paurvi Bhatt. I live in Plymouth, Minnesota; was raised in Minnesota, and am here to share my experience as an only child, a working daughter, family caregiver, and as a second-generation Indian American immigrant, who cared for her aging parents until they died. This testimony is dedicated to my parents – Harshad and Rekha Bhatt – proud Minnesotans and first generation Indian American immigrants who came to the US in the early 1960s. Based on our family story, my experience as a family caregiver, and as a leader in healthcare, I urge you today to pass the Paid Family and Medical Leave Act.

My 25-year caregiving journey began in 1998, when my father was suddenly diagnosed with early onset dementia. He was 58. I was 28. A few years later, our situation escalated when my mother's cancer re-emerged, and her cardiac and lung conditions worsened. Our Indian community in Minnesota didn't know how to support dementia, advanced cancer and lung issues at home, nor how elder care gets managed. You see, immigrants in my parents' era did not get to see their own parents grow old in real time. So, before I knew it, I became my parents' caregiver, and they became my dependents. I had to reorganize my career priorities to help our family face our new reality.

Years later, after my father died, my mom and I lived together until she passed away last year. I worked remotely for over two years, struggling to care for mom while we sheltered in place due to the pandemic. Finding vaccinated, masked, and paid home health workers to help me was difficult. I finally had no choice but to take a long-term leave of absence.

These decisions to prioritize care come with significant tradeoffs. With no siblings or partner, I struggled to protect my own income, health insurance, and retirement savings. I cobbled together limited time and flexibility to keep my career afloat while translating doctor calls, navigating business travel, clearing up family confusion, and making critical financial decisions.

Many of my employers were compassionate, but they did not know how to support me. For years, I managed our situation across cultures and languages, and a rubrics cube of benefit plans and time off policies. Early in my career, when I was pressured to prioritize work over family, I would have to remind my managers that FMLA existed to protect my job. Later in my career, I received greater support from companies who knew caregiving was part of my story. I know this flexibility is not given to many caregivers in the public and private sector who work. That is why I am here today.

I'm sure there is a version of my story happening in your family today. Each of us knows the selfless mother, daughter, sister, niece, or cousin who made the sacrifice to care for a loved one. I am here to remind us that she does it a cost. Women, particularly women of color, assume family care responsibilities so quickly, and so often, without support. When we step into care, we step out of the workforce, without pay, and deliver care without reimbursement. Family caregivers are the backbone of our care system – a system that cannot continue to rest on each family figuring out care on their own, without help. FMLA alone is not enough to keep families strong while they face these challenges.

Minnesota leads the way with world-class health systems, incredible global companies, and the largest healthcare payers in the world. It's crucial that we join the world and provide paid family and medical leave for public and private sector workers.

I urge you to pass Paid Family and Medical Leave. Our diverse tapestry of Minnesotans who care for their loved ones are counting on you.



**Testimony Before the Senate Human Services Committee  
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Submitted by Toni Mangskau  
February 20, 2023**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Minnesota Senate File 2 addressing the need for Paid Family and Medical Leave in our state.

My name is Toni Kay Mangskau. I live in Rochester and am a volunteer for AARP, Isaiah and the National Patient Advocate Foundation.

Through the years, I have been caregiver for 5 family members. I shared caregiving responsibilities with my siblings when my dad was diagnosed with end stage heart and lung disease and when my mom was diagnosed with cancer. When my parents' health started to decline, I became the guardian for my developmentally disabled brother. He has ongoing, significant health issues. I officially became a member of the sandwich generation. Caring for my kids with disabling health issues, aging parents and brother. I have done all of this while working full-time.

My role as a family caregiver has been a financial strain. During a 9-month period in 2017, I went without one-third of my yearly income due to unpaid time off from work. I have had to file for bankruptcy in the past.

In addition to the financial strain, there's also been an emotional strain. When my mom was in hospice, my family and I were so burnt out with trying to juggle work and figuring out who could afford to miss work. With all of this juggling of our work schedules, my mom died alone without family at her bedside. My belief is if we would have had a Paid Family and Medical Leave law in place, my family would have been at her side in her last moments of life.

Unfortunately, my family's story is not uncommon. I work with cancer patients and their families and hear of the same type of experience. Senate File 2 will help ensure that every working Minnesotan can access paid leave protection when needed. This includes our neighbors striving to enter the workforce through the Minnesota Family Investment Program.

I, like so many others, would do anything for loved ones. The value of a family's emotional support and presence during a loved one's illness cannot be measured, and it should not be degraded or punished by the fear of financial difficulty.

It's time for Minnesota lawmakers to pass a paid family and medical leave program that is **comprehensive, accessible and not dependent on whether your employer can offer it.** So many family caregivers are counting on you.

Toni Kay Mangskau  
Rochester, MN.