

Written testimony re SF5430 - Mann, Paid Family & Medical Leave modifications  
Senate Commerce Committee, April 30, 2024

My name is Mearra Allen. I'm a mother of six small children, one of whom is 14 months old. I'm a resident & co-owner of Universal Kuts barbershop in Brooklyn Center and a volunteer leader with the Barbershop & Black Congregation Cooperative of ISAIAH.

I'm a mother of six children, all under the age of ten, with the youngest one a little over a year old. My husband is a self contractor with no paid vacation time or sick pay. He has to work long hours to provide for us and is only available to either transport our kids in the morning or see them to bed.

It is a constant struggle for my husband to find time to be present for our kids because he's working so hard. From time to time I need a break to care for my own mental and emotional health. When we can't take time off work to simply be there for our kids, it becomes stressful and leads to things like depression and anxiety and even causes tension in the home between us. I can't hold that responsibility all by myself.

I worry about what happens if he faces a sudden injury, illness or dying loved one to care for. My husband wants to be there and he deserves to be there for us if something happened to any of us.

This is why I'm very shocked and deeply disappointed to learn of discussions to administer Minnesota's Paid Leave program with an unpaid waiting week for family and medical leaves. When I was hearing updates about the bill and when I testified last year on this bill, I never heard about an unpaid waiting week.

An unpaid waiting period for medical and family leaves would hurt most those who have a sudden injury, illness or dying loved one to care for.

Paid leave means paid leave. Small business owners, self contractors and all workers should have the option to benefit from the state run paid family medical leave program. Everybody deserves to take care of not only family but themselves without worrying how they are going to survive financially throughout their time of medical and family obligations. I worry that people who look like me, low wage workers and mostly women of color who would have paid into the fund would be excluded from enjoying the benefits. To me that's not fair.

I ask that you find a way to have the first week of family and medical leave paid as originally intended. I want to thank Senator Mann for her leadership and thank you for the opportunity to share my story.