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Bills Introduced in House and Senate Seek to Improve Rhode Island's Paid Family Leave Program
Studies show TCI is working for workers & employers

Providence, RI – Bills introduced by Senator Gayle Goldin and Representative Shelby Maldonado would provide more security for workers and their families by expanding access to the state's paid family leave program, the Temporary Caregiver Insurance Program (TCI). TCI provides up to four weeks of partial (about 60%) wage replacement for workers who need to take time from their jobs to care for a seriously ill family member or to bond with a newborn, adopted, or foster child. Proposed amendments to the law, which became effective in January, 2014, would respond to research on the effectiveness of the program, by increasing the number of weeks, the amount of wage replacement and other changes.

“Rhode Island has an opportunity to once again be a leader in supporting workers and their families by expanding the Temporary Caregiver Insurance program” said Rachel Flum, executive director of the Economic Progress Institute. “TCI is popular with workers and business owners. The changes being proposed by this legislation will ensure more Rhode Island workers are able to benefit from this successful program.”

In 2016, around 5,800 workers used TCI to take time for work to bond with a new child (80% of claimants) or provide care for a seriously ill family member (20% of claimants). TCI benefits are paid through the Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) fund, which is funded entirely by employee payroll deductions.

A study by researchers at the University of Rhode Island found that workers who used TCI reported greater satisfaction with their ability to maintain financial stability, greater satisfaction with their transition back to work and better overall physical health and lower stress than workers who needed to take leave but could not use TCI. A survey of 213 small and mid-size businesses by the Columbia Business School found that a majority (61%) had a favorable opinion of TCI.

Proposed changes to the law would increase the average wage replacement percentage from 60% to 100% (up to a statutory benefit cap), expanding opportunity for lower-wage workers to use the program. The bills propose exempting a portion of a lower-wage workers' salary from contribution to the TDI fund so they are able to keep more of their paycheck while they are working and would also allow state workers to use TCI and TDI.

The number of weeks a worker could use TCI would increase under the proposed legislation from four to six weeks in 2018 and up to eight weeks in 2019 and workers would be able to use TCI to care for a seriously ill grandchild or sibling, categories of family members not currently included in the law.

“Thousands of families have already benefitted from TCI,” said Senator Gayle Goldin. “Since passage of TCI in Rhode Island, New York has surpassed us on the number of weeks available and California increased the wage replacement. We can do better in Rhode Island and we will.”

“While TCI is helping to support families’ work-life balance, workers tell us that four weeks leave time is not enough,” said Representative Shelby Maldonado. “Increasing the number of weeks is an important step to help workers take care of family members or give their child a good start in life while knowing their job is secure.”

For more information, see the Economic Progress Institute factsheet available at www.economicprogressri.org/paidleave

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About The Economic Progress Institute

The Economic Progress Institute is a nonpartisan research and policy organization dedicated to improving the economic well-being of low- and modest-income Rhode Islanders. For more information visit www.economicprogressri.org.