

House Bill 1441

Submitted to House Industry, Business and Labor Committee

February 8, 2021

Testimony by Sandra Tibke, Executive Director of Prevent Child Abuse ND

Chairman Lefor and members of the Committee,

I am Sandy Tibke, Executive Director of Prevent Child Abuse ND. Prevent Child Abuse ND (PCAND) is a state-wide organization dedicated to preventing child abuse and neglect. On behalf of Prevent Child Abuse North Dakota (PCAND), I am here supporting HB 1441.

At some point, most employees must take time away from their job to deal with a personal or family illness, care for a new child or help an aging parent. The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) has helped employees and employers balance work-life issues. However, FMLA does not go far enough. It does not apply to 40% of the workforce—those primarily in less secure, lower-paying jobs. Families must deal with extended absences risking job loss, income decline for their family, and increased stress on families and our youngest citizens, their children. Additionally, parents must make the impossible choice between unhurried time to bond with their babies during the most crucial and formative months of the child's development and losing their jobs or economic security without access to paid family leave.

Prevent Child Abuse North Dakota (PCAND) supports this bill because it brings stability to families of young children. Less family stress reduces child maltreatment. Positive paid family leave increases family security, thus contributing to positive child development. Research shows paid family leave:

- Sets the stage for better developmental outcomes in children, including fewer behavioral problems and better cognitive attainment. Because early relationships nurture early brain connections that

form the foundation for all learning and relationships that follow, parents and caregivers are on the front line of preparing our future workers, innovators, and citizens.

- Contributes to fewer low birthweight babies, fewer infant deaths, and higher rates of breastfeeding.
- Reduces pediatric abusive head trauma. Financial insecurity leads to increased parental stress, which could be a trigger for abuse and neglect; providing families with stronger household financial security reduces abuse and neglect. Prevention of all child abuse (not only head trauma) from occurring in the first place becomes cost-effective in the long-term saving money in remediation programs, juvenile justice, prisons, etc.

Apart from PCAND's concern for families and children, paid family leave benefits the small and large businesses and our economy. Again, research shows paid family leave:

- Contributes to a high employee retention rate. Paid family leave boosts employee satisfaction and reduces turnover.
- Levels the playing field for small businesses competing with big business. Small business owners can provide this critical service to their employees with paid family leave without risking financial ruin.
- Grows local economies and saves state expenditures in child maltreatment.
- Offers nonworking parents support to enter the workforce. Today, 70% of nonworking Americans who live below the poverty line have young children. They cite "taking care of home/family as the reason they're not in the workforce."

Again, I encourage your consideration and support of this important policy. I stand for any questions you may have of me.

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