



March 1, 2023

The Honorable Kristin Roers
Chair, Senate State and Local Government Committee
600 E Boulevard Ave.
State Capitol
Bismarck, ND 58505

Re: Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 4018

Dear Chair Roers and members of the Committee:

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) appreciates the opportunity to comment on SCR 4018, which considers a study on the feasibility and desirability of paid family medical leave. We thank Senators Cleary and Hogan and Representatives Christy, Hanson, and Ista for their work on this issue.

LLS supports the intent of the legislation and urges your committee to strengthen it by doing the following:

- Rather than considering a study, the legislation could instruct Legislative Management to conduct such a study. The legislative process offers ample opportunity for lawmakers to consider the need for this study, so further consideration should not be necessary and could cause delay.
- Ensure the study evaluates a comprehensive paid family and medical leave benefit. The components of such a study should include: the ability to use leave for oneself or a family member; protection from job loss; meaningful wage replacement; and coverage for the greatest possible number of employees, including those at small employers.

The mission of LLS is to cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease, and myeloma and improve the quality of life of people living with blood cancer, and their families. Paid family and medical leave helps patients like those we represent pursue medical treatment earlier. It helps them manage that treatment without fearing job loss or financial disaster. It helps the parents of children with cancer focus on their child's care.

Without access to job-protected paid family and medical leave, cancer patients and caregivers can face crushing choices between their physical and emotional health and well-being. A 2021 American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network survey found that half of cancer patients, a third of cancer survivors,

and roughly half of caregivers experienced financial hardship resulting from lack of paid leave access.ⁱ In another study, 59% of colorectal cancer patients without paid leave had to leave their jobs after a cancer diagnosis and suffered long-term economic consequences.ⁱⁱ

For cancer patients of color (who are more likely to experience severe medical illness because of disparities in insurance coverage status, access to healthy food, and exposure to environmental pollutants), not having paid leave can be life-threatening.ⁱⁱⁱ

Comprehensive paid family and leave policies would help to relieve these pressures. These policies would allow workers to pursue medical treatment earlier, both for themselves and their family members, and manage treatment without worrying about maintaining their employment to afford such medical treatment.^{iv} Across the whole population, access to paid leave is associated with decreased all-cause mortality rates.^v

We urge the committee to amend SCR 4018 to require a study on a comprehensive paid family and medical leave benefit that includes robust job protections, meaningful wage replacement, the ability to use leave for oneself or family members, and coverage for the greatest possible number of employees, including those at small employers. These are crucial elements to include when considering a strong paid leave program.

Thank you again for your deliberation on this critical healthcare issue. Please contact me at dana.bacon@lls.org or 612.308.0479 for further information on our position on this issue.

Sincerely,



Dana Bacon
Senior Director, State Government Affairs
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

ⁱ American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. (n.d.). Paid Leave is an Important Component of Cancer Care for Working Patients, Survivors and Caregivers. *Fightcancer.Org*. Retrieved September 10, 2021, from <https://www.fightcancer.org/sites/default/files/Paid%20Leave%20External%20Factsheet%20Final%2010-23-20.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Romig K, Bryant K. A National Paid Leave Program Would Help Workers, Families. *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*. April 27, 2021. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/economy/a-national-paid-leave-program-would-help-workers-families>

^{iv} Boesch D. Quick Facts on Paid Family and Medical Leave. *Center for American Progress*. February 5, 2021. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/news/2021/02/05/495504/quick-facts-paid-family-medical-leave/>

^v Paid Sick Leave Laws. *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*. June 3, 2020. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health/strategies/paid-sick-leave-laws>