

The Village Common of Rhode Island

Aging Better Together

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

The Honorable Arthur J. Corvese, Chair

Testimony by H. Philip West Jr on April 9, 2025,

in support of 25-H 6066 by Representative Joshua J. Giraldo

TEMPORARY DISABILITY INSURANCE

Thank you, Chairman Corvese and members of the House Committee on Labor for giving time to an vital issue for thousands of Rhode Islanders. **I testify in support of 25-H 6066 that would expand the state's Temporary Disability Insurance program by (1) adding necessary definitions of "care recipient," "grandchild," and "sibling" to the law, (2) enlarging the definition of "parent" to include *legal* parents, (3) allowing sole proprietors and self-employed persons to participate voluntarily in the program, (4) increasing the taxable wage base for contributions, and (5) raising and limiting the maximum weekly benefit.**

My name is H. Philip West, Jr., and I serve as a volunteer lobbyist on behalf of The Village Common of Rhode Island, a statewide non-profit that helps older adults live safely and independently in their homes. We coordinate volunteer services through locally organized and operated villages in Barrington, Burrillville, Cranston, Glocester, Middletown, Newport, Pawtucket, Portsmouth, Providence, Warwick, and Westerly. We are currently helping local volunteers form new villages in Bristol-Warren, Exeter, Cumberland, and Jamestown. Our volunteers save lives and money. Our motto is: "Aging Better Together."

We commend Representative Giraldo for proposing modest but significant changes in Rhode Island's Temporary Disability Insurance Program.

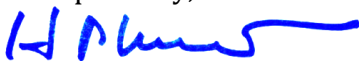
In our efforts to assist family caregivers, the Village Common volunteers have recognized the need to expand the circle of family caregivers, particularly in merged families or nontraditional homes. In practical terms, family caregivers — usually women — often feel overwhelmed and unsupported. Many feel immense physical and financial pressure. In some settings, when workers take time off to care for their loved ones, they risk losing their jobs. These facts of life are amplified for low-income workers who spend their shifts caring for others.

Rhode Island's current law provides essential paid time off that allows some workers to stay home briefly to care for family members. Representative Giraldo's legislation will (1) address the needs of all workers, regardless of what they do or where they live, (2) allow a wider circle of caregivers to help care for loved ones, and (3) keep at least some sick and temporarily incapacitated recipients of care out of hospitals and nursing homes.

On the employer side, 25-H 6066 will allow businesses of all sizes to retain employees who need time off to provide such care.

This important legislation recognizes that caregivers may not be blood relatives or in traditional family relationships with care recipients, a situation we in the Village Common often encounter. **We urge the House Committee on Labor to recommend 25-H 6066 for passage by the full House.**

Respectfully,



H. Philip West Jr., Lobbyist #12757

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1. Expand TCI wage reimbursement from 60% to 85% average weekly wages beginning January 2026
2. Expand eligibility for workers to take caregiving leave for siblings, grandchildren, and care recipients
3. Create an opt-in option for sole-proprietors and self-employed workers
4. Increase the contribution limit up to the federal Social Security Limit (2025 - **\$176,100**)

Key Talking Points:

- Equity in access for minimum wage workers:
 - Minimum wage workers can not afford to utilize TCI due to the 40% pay cut they would be forced to take while on TCI
 - Rhode Island has the highest employee payroll tax and one of the lowest wage reimbursement for a state paid family and medical leave program
- Expanded family definition improves:
 - Accessibility and equity for LGBTQ; immigrants; people who aged out of state foster care/those who have no immediate family or relatives, and veterans
- Equity for birthing parents and babies:
 - Reduce racial disparities in infant mortality rates
 - Improved infant health and development; easier to breastfeed newborns; in line with doctor recommended length of bonding time
 - Improved post-partum outcomes – reduced postpartum depression symptoms
- Paid family leave [reduces need for nursing home](#) and helps elders age in place
 - RI's population is aging rapidly and we already have workforce and capacity issues in elder care
- Paid family leave is NOT a vacation
 - Documentation of serious illness must be submitted to DLT in order to approve TCI
 - It is physical and emotional labor to care for a seriously ill family member and bond and care for a newborn baby and/or an adopted or foster child
- Paid family leave is [good for small businesses](#)
 - It helps small businesses recruit and retain high quality employees and remain competitive with larger corporations. Paid family leave is proven to save businesses money and improves employee satisfaction
- Paid family leave is fully funded by employees and expansions require no general revenue
- The more personal the better!

Written Testimony Tips:

1. Address written testimony to the Committee holding the hearing (To: House Labor Committee)
2. Include your name, (title and organization, if appropriate) at the top of your testimony
3. Put the testimony on agency letterhead if you have it.
4. Include the Bill Number (HB-6066) and clearly state you support the bill at the top.

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5. Try to keep testimony to one page. Explain what your organization does (or who you are) and why you support the bill. Provide relevant data and/or a story about a child, caregiver, or family who would be positively impacted by the bill.
6. Save your testimony as a PDF if possible and include your organization (or your name), position, and the bill number in the file name so it is easier for the General Assembly staff to manage these files.
7. Submit your testimony via email by the deadline (around 3 pm on Wednesday) so committee members will be able to read it during the hearing. You can also submit after the hearing, but it is less likely the committee members will read the testimony. Testimony is often posted on a [General Assembly website](#) after the hearing.
8. Email testimony to HouseLabor@rilegislature.gov

Please reach out to me if you have any questions (at 248-880-2988). I will providing verbal testimony and if you are planning to as well, email/text me and we can coordinate!

Thank you!
Divya

Divya Nair, MSW (she/her)

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The Economic Progress Institute