

## WRITTEN TESTIMONY

**Bill No.:** HB 7968: An Act Relating to Labor Relations – Temporary Disability Insurance – General Provisions  
**Primary Sponsors:** Representatives Giraldo, Alzate, Cruz, Donovan and Morales  
**To:** House Labor Committee  
**From:** Women’s Fund of Rhode Island Policy & Advocacy Committee Members  
**Date:** March 5, 2026

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The Women’s Fund of Rhode Island (“WFRI”) and its Policy & Advocacy Committee support this bill. WFRI is a non-profit organization that invests in women and girls through research, advocacy, grant making and strategic partnerships designed to achieve gender equity through systematic change. As Committee members, we represent residents from Charlestown, [fill in towns]. We are family-members, parents, and professionals in Rhode Island and fully support this bill.

**This bill increases the maximum leave to 12 weeks by 2028, expands caregiving leave to include grandchildren and care recipients, and establishes an opt-in option for self-employed workers and sole proprietors.**

This bill strengthens Rhode Island’s families, businesses, and economy by modernizing a program that is fundamental to the well-being of our workforce.

The core of this bill – increasing maximum leave to 12 weeks – gives workers essential time to care for new children or seriously ill loved ones without the threat of losing income. This directly supports both public health outcomes and household economic stability. For many working families, especially those headed by women and minorities who disproportionately bear caregiving burdens, the current leave is simply not enough. HB 7968 corrects this by ensuring workers can care for the people who matter most without facing financial devastation.

Opponents incorrectly frame paid leave as a burden on businesses. In reality, a robust TCI program is a powerful tool for economic development. The proposed expansion will assist small businesses in recruiting and retaining high-quality employees who might choose employment with larger corporations that offer more competitive benefits. This reduces costly employee turnover and boosts productivity.

Furthermore, by establishing an opt-in for self-employed workers and sole proprietors, this bill strengthens our entire entrepreneurial ecosystem. It provides a critical safety net that allows independent workers to thrive. Most importantly, the TCI program is fully funded by employees; this expansion requires no general revenue increase and places no direct financial burden on employers.

This bill promotes equality for all workers across the state. By expanding caregiving leave to include grandchildren and other designated care recipients, it recognizes the diverse structures of modern families and addresses a key disparity in the existing law. This bill is critical to ensure Rhode Island remains a competitive place to live, work, and run a business.

For these reasons, the Women’s Fund of Rhode Island strongly urges the members of the Labor Committee to vote in support of this bill.

Signed: Jennifer Sylvia, Abeer Khatana, Sophia Weaver, and Flor Cabreja