



March 5, 2026

The Honorable Arthur J. Corvese
House Committee on Labor
Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

SUBJECT: Support for House Bill 7968

Dear Chair Corvese and Members of the Committee:

The American Heart Association would like to voice support for H. 7968, AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- TEMPORARY DISABILITY INSURANCE -- GENERAL PROVISIONS, by Representative Giraldo, and we thank the committee for the opportunity to submit testimony. This important legislation would enhance benefits under Rhode Island's Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI) Program and Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) Program.

The American Heart Association is the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke. Heart disease is the No. 1 killer worldwide, and stroke ranks second globally. Even when those conditions don't result in death, they cause disability and diminish quality of life. We want to see a world free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke. Our mission is to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives.

H. 7968 would provide a TCI/TDI opt-in for self-employed workers; expand the benefit definitions of temporary caregiver leave to include a grandchild and care recipient to encompass the diversity of modern families; and increase a leave benefits period to ten (10) weeks for 2027 and twelve (12) weeks for 2028.

The proposed improvements to the TCI and TDI programs are vital for Rhode Islanders. Paid leave is important for heart attack survivors in recovery.ⁱ Nursing parents who have access to paid leave are more likely to breastfeed, which has been shown to improve the heart health of the parent and baby.ⁱⁱ Women who take paid leave after the birth of a child are more likely to reenter the workforce within a year of the child's birth.ⁱⁱⁱ In addition, workers who can take paid time off work to care for themselves or a family member may be more productive.^{iv}

Please support H. 7968 to ensure Rhode Island employees and self-employed workers have access to TCI and TDI benefits that provide sufficient paid time off to manage a serious personal health condition, care for a family member with a serious health condition, or bond with a new child after birth, adoption, or placement in foster care.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Megan Tucker
Region Senior Director, Field Advocacy
American Heart Association
megan.tucker@heart.org

ⁱ Dreyer RP, Xu X, Zhang W, Du X, Strait KM, Bierlein M, et al. Return to Work After Acute Myocardial Infarction: Comparison Between Young Women and Men. *Circ Cardiovasc Qual Outcomes*. 2016;9:S45-52.

ⁱⁱ Huang R, Yang M. Paid maternity leave and breastfeeding practice before and after California's implementation of the nation's first paid leave program. *Econ Hum Bio*. 2015; 16:45-59. doi: 10.1016/j.ehb.2013.12.009.

Tschiderer L, Seekircher L, Kunutsor SK, Peters SAE, O'Keeffe LM, Willeit P. Breastfeeding is associated with a reduced maternal cardiovascular risk: systematic review and meta-analysis involving data from 8 studies and 1,192 700 parous women. *J Am Heart Assoc*. 2022; 11(2):e022746. doi: 10.1161/JAHA.121.022746.

Miliku K, Moraes TJ, Becker AB, Mandhane PJ, Sears MR, Turvey SE, et al. Breastfeeding in the first days of life is associated with lower blood pressure at 3 years of age. *J Am Heart Assoc*. 2021; 10(15):e019067. doi: 10.1161/JAHA.120.019067.

ⁱⁱⁱ Houser L and Vartanian TP. Pay matters: The positive economic impacts of paid family leave for families, businesses and the public: Rutgers Center for Women and Work; 2012.

^{iv} Appelbaum E and Milkman R. Leaves that pay: Employer and worker experiences with paid family leave in California. 2011. Available at: <https://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/paid-family-leave-1-2011.pdf>.

The Council of Economic Advisors; Executive Office of the President of the United States. The economics of paid and unpaid leave. June 2014. Available at: https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/leave_report_final.pdf.