

Dear Chairperson Corvese and members of the House Labor Committee:

I am Natasha Blackadar from Providence. I am a licensed mental health counselor trained in perinatal mental health. I am also a new mother. I support H-7968 because at 8 weeks postpartum, I was still in significant pain from a traumatic birth and unplanned C-section, as well as recovering from preeclampsia and anemia. At 8 weeks old, my son needed to go to weekly occupational therapy appointments to help him with challenges he experienced due to a difficult labor. I was lucky to have more time off from my job at Butler Hospital, but if I had to return to work 8 weeks after birth, I would have had to quit because it would have been impossible to take care of myself and my baby. Additionally, I know from my extensive work providing therapy to pregnant and postpartum women, that the first few weeks and months postpartum are an especially vulnerable time for mental health. Nearly 1 in 5 women develop a perinatal mood or anxiety disorder. Alleviating financial stress and the unrelenting pressure to return to work quickly could go a long way in helping these women. Please vote for mothers to get more time to recover, babies to bond with their caregivers and thrive, and to keep women in the workforce if that is their choice.

I urge you to vote in favor of bill H-7968.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Natasha Blackadar

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