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WOMEN'S POLITICAL COMMITTEE

**SFWPC Support for AB-518
related to Paid Family Leave - Eligibility**

June 21, 2023

The Honorable Senator Dave Cortese
Chair, Committee on Labor, Public Employment and Retirement
1021 O Street, Room 6740
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB-518 (Wicks) - Paid family leave: eligibility: care for designated persons.

Dear Senator Cortese,

On behalf of the San Francisco Women's Political Committee (SFWPC), we are writing in strong support of AB-518, which will update existing unemployment compensation disability laws, to allow employees to take advantage of the wage-replacement program related to Paid Family Leave (PFL), in order to care for their "chosen family", beyond the law's current definition of "family".

As an organization who champions policies that advance intersectional feminism, wellness, and equity, we recognize that families come in many forms, and should receive equal recognition when it comes to PFL. The current definition of "family", for wage-replacement benefits, is outdated. It only covers blood relatives, spouses, and registered domestic partners. To reflect modern times, it needs to take into account the family-like bonds people have with an extended network, such as godparents/children, honorary aunts/uncles, long-time family friends, adoptive and foster family, and partners who don't want to marry or people who have no living or close relatives.

The concept of nuclear family is declining all over the country. Census Bureau Data from 2020 shows that only 18.4% of American households follow this structure¹

¹ Making the case for chosen family in paid family and medical leave policies. Center for American Progress.
<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/making-case-chosen-family-paid-family-medical-leave-policies>



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(married couple with minor children). The concept of “chosen family” is also particularly important for the LGBTQ community. Indeed, aging LGBTQ individuals are especially dependent on close friends for emergencies, and fewer than half of them are likely to rely on their biological family for caregiving and support when sick². This correlates with the fact that 83 percent of eldercare providers in the country (defined as individuals who provide unpaid care to at least one person age 65 or older) provide eldercare exclusively to non-household members³. We also recognize that caregiving activities disproportionately fall on women, who would heavily benefit from the bill. Within the current framework of the law, an employee in this situation is unable to benefit from PFL, and the associated wage-replacement, and would have to take paid time off, if/when allowed by their employer, or take unpaid leave.

This bill allows employees to identify a designated person when claiming PFL wage-replacement benefits. The wide definition of “designated person” in the bill will allow employees to be present for their loved ones, whatever their relationship is to them. AB-518 creates a PFL program that is truly inclusive and fair, allowing employees who already contribute through their paychecks to enjoy the same benefits as their co-workers who fit within the nuclear family model.

We urge you to support AB-518. By supporting this legislation, we can create a PFL program that does not discriminate against employees for their family situation. We also protect and celebrate the many “chosen family members” in our lives, who provide care and support to all of us.

Sincerely,

SFWPC Board of Directors

² Making paid leave work for every family. Center for American Progress.

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/making-paid-leave-work-for-every-family/>

³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unpaid eldercare in the United States

<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/elcare.t02.htm>