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Dear esteemed members of the House,

We are writing to show our support for H.3560, which would provide paid family leave to state officers and employees. House bill 3560 would provide state employees with 12 weeks of paid parental leave to recover from the birth and care for their child or the placement of the child for adoption with the employee. Federal law, the Family and Medical Leave Act, does allow some employees time off—12 weeks for a new child — but it is unpaid. We applaud the House’s efforts for championing this important issue.

A Better Balance is a non-profit advocacy organization that uses the power of the law to advance justice for workers, so they can care for themselves and their loved ones without jeopardizing their economic security. We have years of experience and vast legal expertise working to craft and implement policies in states and cities across the country that support working families, including paid family leave. Through our regional Southern Office, which serves states across the South, including South Carolina, we have heard from countless workers through our free and confidential legal helpline who lack access to paid family leave, and are faced with an impossible choice between caring for their loved ones and maintaining their economic security.

Providing full time state officers and employees with paid parental leave is a crucial step in improving child health outcomes in South Carolina. Paid parental leave promotes critical medical visits and breastfeeding by making it more feasible, which ensures positive outcomes on the child’s physical and mental health. In one state that implemented paid family leave, the median duration of breastfeeding doubled for all new mothers who took paid leave.¹ Additionally, paid leave for new parents is an important measure to reduce infant and child mortality.² Whether an employee is taking leave to care for their child who has just been born or their child who has recently been placed with them for adoption, this is a vital bonding time for families. Guaranteeing twelve weeks of paid leave for state employees would allow more parents to bond with their children at this critical juncture.

¹ Breastfeeding Recommendations and Benefits, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Last reviewed Nov. 4, 2019), <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/infantandtoddlernutrition/breastfeeding/recommendations-benefits.html>.

² A Better Balance, For the Health of Our Families: Engaging the Health Community in Paid Family Leave Outreach and Education, Oct. 2018, <https://www.abetterbalance.org/resources/report-for-the-health-of-our-families-engaging-the-health-community-in-paid-family-leave-outreach-and-education/>.

Fathers can also reap important health benefits from taking leave. One study observed that over the long term, “fathers who took paternity leave took less sick time, needed fewer days of inpatient care, and even had longer life expectancy than men who did not take leave.”³ Overall, providing paid leave increases engagement and involvement for fathers in their children’s lives,⁴ which in turn can lead to increased cognitive growth in children.⁵ The paid leave provided by H.3560 would enable new parents to take this vital leave to care for themselves and their children without risking their paycheck.

The current pandemic and ensuing economic crisis have highlighted the need for paid family leave. Workers must be able to take the time they need to care for their loved ones without risking their financial security, especially during the unprecedented COVID-19 public health and economic crisis. Nationwide, just 23% of state government employees and 26% of local government employees have access to paid family leave.⁶ Low-wage workers and people of color, who are more likely to depend on every paycheck, are even less likely to have access to this critical protection.⁷ According to a 2012 report, nearly one in four working mothers return to work within just two weeks of giving birth.⁸

In the wake of the current economic crisis affecting so many working families, where women and particularly women of color are bearing the brunt of the hardship, it is imperative that we support working parents who cannot afford to take unpaid time off from work. Without the protection of paid family leave, these parents often have no other choice but to sacrifice their paycheck or their family’s savings due to complications from birth, needing to care for an infant born prematurely or with special needs, or when adequate daycare is not available.

Paid family leave has economic benefits to South Carolina, as well. In a 2018 survey of state and local government employers, 83% of respondents listed recruitment and retention of

³ Anna Månsson et al., Paternity Leave in Sweden – Costs, Savings and Health Gains, *HEALTH POLICY* 82 (2007) 102-115, 107, 112.

⁴ Maria del Carmen Huerta et al., *Fathers’ Leave, Fathers’ Involvement and Child Development Are They Related? Evidence from Four OECD Countries* (2013).

⁵ Ann Sarkadi et al., “Fathers’ involvement and children’s developmental outcomes: a systematic review of longitudinal studies,” *Acta Paediatrica* 97: 153-158 (2008).

⁶ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employee Benefits Survey: Mar. 2020*, Table 31 (2020), <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2020/employee-benefits-in-the-united-states-march-2020.pdf>

⁷ National Partnership for Women and Families, *Paid Family and Medical Leave: A Racial Justice Issue- and Opportunity*, (2018), p. 5, <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/workplace/paid-leave/paid-family-and-medical-leave-racial-justice-issue-and-opportunity.pdf>

⁸ 1 in 4 American moms return to work within 2 weeks of giving birth — here’s what it’s like, *Vox* (Aug. 22, 2015), <https://www.vox.com/2015/8/21/9188343/maternity-leave-united-states>.



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qualified personnel as a top priority workforce issue.⁹ Paid family leave has been shown to increase employee retention and lower turnover, which cuts down on rehiring and training costs.¹⁰

Paid family leave is essential to working parents, particularly those with young children. Improving access to paid family leave by providing it to state employees and officials would have economic benefits for the state and improve health outcomes for young children and their parents. We commend the House of Representatives for taking this necessary step to support working families in South Carolina.

In conclusion, we urge you to vote yes for the H 3560.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Gedmark
Vice President

Kameron Dawson
Staff Attorney

⁹ Center for State & Local Government Excellence, *Survey Findings, State and Local Government Workforce: 2020 Survey*, (April 2020), <https://slge.org/assets/uploads/2020/04/workforcesurvey2020.pdf>.

¹⁰ Eileen Appelbaum and Ruth Milkman, *Leaves That Pay: Employer and Worker Experiences with Paid Family Leave in California*, (2011), p. 8, <http://cepr.net/documents/publications/paid-family-leave-1-2011.pdf>.