

Coalition of YWCA's of New York State

Testimony by Rosemary (Rowie) Taylor on Paid Family Leave on behalf of the Coalition of YWCA's of New York State

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 Elmira & Twin Tiers
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 Greater Capital Region
 Jamestown
 Mohawk Valley
 Niagara Frontier
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 Queens
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 Syracuse & Onondaga County
 Ulster County
 Western New York
 Westfield
 White Plains & Central Westchester
 Yonkers

Good afternoon...I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of a strong paid family leave program in New York State. My name is Rowie Taylor and I am testifying on behalf of the Coalition of YWCA's of New York State. The YWCA has a long history of supporting women and girls in their pursuit to live healthy and productive lives. The mission of the organization is to eliminate racism, empower women and promote peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. The YWCA serves a unique population that, in addition to facing barriers directly related to employment and self-sufficiency, may also be dealing with other immediate and significant challenges. Many of the women who utilize the services of YWCAs have struggled with homelessness, incarceration, chronic mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault and significant health and/or developmental disabilities.

Each year, the 20 YWCAs, located throughout New York State, serve tens of thousands of women who are at or below the poverty line. In New York State, 38.7% of families with female heads of household and children present, live in poverty. To directly help these women, there are 15 YWCAs across the state that offer child care/early learning programs and serve nearly 5,000 children each day. There are 9 YWCAs that offer employment preparation and financial literacy programs. The work that the YWCA does is vital to these women's lives.

The YWCAs located across New York have daily experience with women who are struggling to gain a toehold in the American economy. These women are often employed in minimum-wage jobs, earning only slightly above the Federal Poverty level, with little to no job security. Without the Paid Family Leave Act, taking the time to care for a sick child or deal with a family emergency could mean losing the job that pays the rent and puts food on the table. Passing the Paid Family Leave Act will give those women peace of mind that their job will still be there when they are ready to return to work. New York State Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI), which has not been updated for thirty years, currently provides \$170.00 a week in benefits. This falls far short of the \$3,400.00 a month recommended by the New York State Self-sufficiency Steering Committee in 2010. The women who are struggling for self-sufficiency are not able to keep themselves and their children out of poverty with the amount that TDI provides, and will be forced to turn to the state's patchwork of social services, further adding to taxpayer burden. With the Nolan-Addabbo bill currently being considered, women will have the benefit of receiving two-thirds of their weekly wages while away from work. That means they will still be able to pay bills, buy food and medicine, and not lose the toehold they have worked so hard to gain.

We support the Nolan-Addabbo version of the Paid Family Leave Act and believe it will make a positive difference in the lives of women across New York State. We urge the lawmakers of New York to pass this bill, and help better the lives of all New Yorkers.