



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE
STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Bradley Byrne (R-AL), Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections Hearing:
“The Healthy Families Act (H.R. 1784): Examining a Plan to Secure Paid Sick
Leave for U.S. Workers”
March 11, 2020**

(As prepared for delivery)

“The global spread of COVID-19, known more commonly as the coronavirus, has sparked conversations in recent weeks about health and safety in the workplace and paid sick leave policies.

Committee Republicans have long supported legislative solutions that allow businesses of all sizes to develop innovative, personalized, and workable paid leave policies. Allowing business owners the flexibility to develop and offer tailored solutions that work best for their business and their employees can help ensure a positive and productive work environment and help small businesses remain competitive in a tight labor market.

Take the Republican-led *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act*, signed into law by President Trump, for example. This legislation included a tax credit for employers who voluntarily offer at least two weeks of paid family and medical leave to their employees. Another Republican led initiative, H.R. 5656, the *Working Families Flexibility Act*, would allow private-sector employers to offer their employees the choice of paid or comp time in lieu of cash wages for working overtime—a benefit currently available to public-sector workers. And the employee can decide when to use this comp time, just as public sector employees can do.

Just yesterday, President Trump made clear that he is interested in negotiations with Congress regarding additional paid sick leave proposals to help us get through the COVID-19 outbreak. However, this bill is not the answer, and I hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are not using the coronavirus as an

opportunity to prioritize partisan interest in H.R. 1784. Even if it passes the House, this bill has no chance of passage in the other body or becoming law. It is a distraction to the serious, bipartisan work Congress needs to be doing with respect to the coronavirus.

The costly federal mandate contained in H.R. 1784 would do more harm than good and will have unintended consequences. As Ms. Milito notes in her testimony, a National Federation of Independent Business study of the economic impact of this bill showed that it could result in 430,000 jobs lost over a ten-year period and a loss of \$652 billion in cumulative real economic output. More troubling, small firms would account for 58 percent of all jobs lost and small firms would bear 50 percent of lost output. Unfortunately, this sentiment seems to be lost upon my Democratic colleagues who seem determined to create additional hardships for small businesses by imposing a one-size-fits-all government mandate.

Employers are attentive and responsive to current and prospective employees' workplace concerns and preferences for flexible leave policies. Instead of considering H.R. 1784, Congress should empower our nation's business owners to develop and offer flexible and personalized solutions.

In fact, the vast majority of employers are already responding to their employees' needs. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 73 percent of all private industry workers and 83 percent of full-time workers have access to paid sick leave. Small businesses are pulling their weight as well. According to the NFIB, 73 percent of small employers offer paid time off to the majority of their fulltime employees.

The bottom line is paid sick leave benefits are important, but a one-size-fits-all federal mandate is not the answer. In times of economic growth as well as in times of crisis, job creators do not need additional Washington-knows-best, federal mandates weighing them down that will ultimately harm job creation. In the near term, Congress should be working with the Trump Administration regarding policies that help employees rather than considering legislation which micromanages every employer's ability to operate their business.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about how the federal government can continue encouraging the private sector to develop solutions that meet the needs of workers and their families.”

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