March 13, 2022

The Honorable Dave Cortese
State Capitol, Room 6640
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator Cortese,

Subject: SB 1058 (Durazo) EDD Race and Ethnicity Data Collection: Support

On behalf of the following organizations, we write in strong support of SB 1058, which would require the Employment Development Department to collect race and ethnicity data from State Disability Insurance (SDI) and Paid Family Leave (PFL) claimants. We represent a broad coalition of advocacy groups that work to fortify and expand access to paid family and medical leave for all eligible Californians. We strongly believe in ensuring equitable access to these programs, particularly as workers of all racial backgrounds and income levels pay into the fund.

As numerous studies show, access to paid family and medical leave improves the physical, mental, and economic wellbeing of families and communities.¹ Paid family leave has been linked to decreased rates of infant mortality, improved long-term health outcomes for children, decreased stress for caregivers and new parents, and the encouragement of equitable co-parenting.² Paid medical leave is one of the most highly needed and accessed programs, and helps to reduce income volatility, particularly if the disabled worker is a sole income provider for their family.³ The benefits of paid family and medical leave are perhaps even more important and impactful for low-income families and people of color, who have been historically excluded from labor protections and are less likely to hold the types of jobs that provide paid leave, job security, health insurance benefits, and flexible scheduling.⁴

For decades, the California SDI and PFL programs have enabled millions of workers to take paid leave to care for themselves, a seriously ill loved one, or to welcome a new child. At the same time, we are aware from private research reports and surveys that specific racial disparities exist with respect to which Californians currently access and receive SDI and PFL benefits. In a recent study conducted with new mothers in California, researchers found that, “while 71% of white women received 12 to 14 weeks (depending on their mode of delivery) of pay from the government, just about half of Black (49%) and Hispanic (52%) women received that much pay.”⁵ In contrast,

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² Id.
⁴ Latinos Least Likely to Have Paid Leave or Workplace Flexibility, The Center for American Progress (November 2012), https://www.americanprogress.org/article/latinos-least-likely-to-have-paid-leave-or-workplace-flexibility/?longform=true
compared to just 19% of white women, 47% of Black and 36% of Hispanic women received no pay at all from the government.\textsuperscript{6}

Without official data from the EDD, however, we lack key insights and official, measurable data on these known disparities. This is of grave concern to us, because without official data from the EDD, we are unable to truly quantify, assess and address racial disparities in PFL and SDI access. Data is essential to identifying gaps in awareness and access to these programs. For example, the Paid Family Leave Market Research Report (developed by the EDD and Andrew Chang & Company, LLC in 2015) was able to use collected gender data to identify that biological fathers were disproportionately unaware of and/or less likely to receive PFL benefits.\textsuperscript{7} Relying on this data, the report then made specific recommendations to increase awareness among this group, such as incorporating information about fathers’ eligibility for benefits within messaging already given to biological mothers. We know that targeted outreach through culturally sensitive channels and trusted messengers is key to spreading awareness and generating uptake, and we know that this work must be informed by specific knowledge of which communities face the deepest disparities.

Collecting and tracking race and ethnicity data through SDI and PFL applications will help ensure that advocates, legislators, researchers, non-profits, healthcare providers, community organizations, and members of the public have a clear picture of which racial demographics disproportionately access and receive SDI and PFL benefits. In addition, due to existing law, collection of race and ethnicity data from claimants to these programs will require the EDD to collect voluntary self-identification information pertaining to sexual orientation and gender identity as well, increasing information about uptake among LGBTQ+ claimants.\textsuperscript{8}

Given the vast benefits of paid leave generally, as well as its transformative potential to positively impact marginalized communities and low-wage workers, it is essential to collect race and ethnicity data from SDI and PFL claimants, and to use this data to ensure equitable access, outreach, and uptake of these programs. For these reasons, we urge your strong support for SB 1058.

Sincerely,

A Better Balance
AARP California
American Medical Women's Association
Association of California Caregiver Resource Centers
BARHII
BreastfeedLA
Buen Vecino
California Breastfeeding Coalition
California Employment Lawyers Association

\textsuperscript{6} Id.
California Health Professional Student Alliance
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
California Physicians Alliance
California Work & Family Coalition, Katie Waters-Smith, Political Organizing Director
Caring Across Generations
Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice
Child Care Law Center
Children Now
Equal Rights Advocates
Food Empowerment Project
Friends Committee on Legislation of California
Global Communities Healthy Start
Human Impact Partners
LA Best Babies Network
Legal Aid at Work
Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP)
National Council of Jewish Women Los Angeles
National Employment Law Project
National Partnership for Women & Families
Nevada County Citizens for Choice
Public Counsel
ROC California
San Diego County Breastfeeding Coalition
San Francisco Senior and Disability Action
Thai Community Development Center
Working Partnerships USA
Worksafe