

**Statement of Carolyn Maloney, Chair
Joint Economic Committee Hearing
July 23, 2009**

As Prepared for Delivery

Good morning. I want to welcome our distinguished panel of witnesses and thank you all for your testimony today.

The American workplace has not kept pace with the changing needs of workers and families. Both Ozzie and Harriet go to work now, so most families no longer have a stay-at-home parent to care for a new child, a sick spouse, or an aging parent.

Businesses that offer policies that help employees meet the competing demands of work and family have seen the benefits to their bottom lines with increased productivity and a more committed workforce.

This is a timely hearing because employees and their families, as well as employers, need flexibility more than ever.

The value of flexibility to employers has increased because the recession has pressed all sectors of business and government to find ways to improve performance. Workplace flexibility is an inexpensive and effective way to motivate employees by humanizing jobs at a time when so many aspects of our economy are harsh.

Some businesses do understand the value of flexibility for workers. A 2007 survey conducted by this committee found that among America's largest and most successful employers, 79 percent provide paid leave for new parents, and 45 percent provide unpaid leave beyond the 12 weeks mandated under the Family and Medical Leave Act.

Businesses that rigidly cling to policies created when employees had fewer family responsibilities have fallen behind the times. Managers who believe there is 'one best way' to get the job done, and do not listen to their employees, are missing out on valuable innovations. A lack of flexibility gives demoralized employees even less reason to help their businesses survive and thrive.

Perhaps most important in today's economic climate is that flexibility can help save jobs. Employees understand this – a survey conducted this March found that a solid majority of employees are willing to take on additional and unpaid leave or vacation, or to switch to a four-day workweek in order to prevent layoffs. Many employees are ready to share their job with

another individual, or to take on reduced hours with reduced pay. Employees stand ready to work with employers to use flexible workplace options to control costs and preserve jobs.

Flexibility is also crucial to the future of our economy. Employers who do not support flexible work arrangements will find valued employees fleeing at the first sign of recovery in the labor market, in addition to losing out now on the benefits of having a committed workforce.

The Working Families Flexibility Act can help. Our best employers are already using flexibility as a strategy to weather the recession, and I hope we hear more about these employers today. The Working Families Flexibility Act, which I have sponsored in the House, will ultimately benefit all American employees, businesses, and our economy by making the strategy used by our most successful businesses into public policy.

It will generate the productivity we need to propel our economy forward in these tough times and to sustain our competitive position as the economy recovers.

I have long championed policies to support working families, such as the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993. But more must be done to help families, which is why I have also sponsored the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act, which recently passed the House of Representatives and provides new parents with four weeks of paid time off.

If we as a nation truly value families, then we need new workplace policies that support our working families and set our children on a path for success early in life.

I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses today.

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