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**Opening Statement of Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI), Chairman,  
Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions  
Hearing on H.R. 4219, the “Workflex in the 21st Century Act”**

Good morning, and welcome to today’s subcommittee hearing. I would like to thank members of the subcommittee and our witnesses for joining us today as we discuss H.R. 4219, the *Workflex in the 21st Century Act*.

The American workplace continues to evolve in many positive ways, reflecting changes in employer and employee needs, attitudes, and preferences. Traditionally, competitive salaries and pay raises have been the primary ways for employers to attract and retain quality employees. While these recruiting tools are still important, more and more Americans have begun demanding flexible paid leave policies (including telework and other work arrangements). In fact, a 2015 survey conducted by Harris Poll found that nearly four in five employees preferred new or additional benefits or other perks over a pay raise.

The vast majority of full-time private sector employees have access to paid vacation leave and paid sick leave (90 percent and 82 percent, respectively). Even so, many states and local governments are mandating their own paid leave requirements.

To date, 10 states and the District of Columbia have a paid sick leave law on the books, as well as more than 30 localities. This has unsurprisingly resulted in a confusing patchwork of paid leave mandates that has led to increased compliance, administrative, and litigation costs.

Small businesses are especially vulnerable as they struggle beneath the burden of understanding and implementing these requirements, and employers that operate across state lines and multiple jurisdictions must now work to satisfy widely varying requirements that differ from state to state.

In answer to both the changes in the workplace and workforce and the growing patchwork of paid leave mandates, Congresswoman Mimi Walters

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from California introduced H.R. 4219, the *Workflex in the 21st Century Act*, this past November.

This legislation would encourage and allow companies and employers to voluntarily offer their employees a benefits plan that provides a generous paid leave policy as well as a flexible work arrangement option. In fact, the plans allowed by the bill would provide more paid leave to employees than all state paid leave laws and most local laws.

This legislation would accomplish a number of things: first, it would provide employers with a clear-cut solution to the growing confusion around state and local paid leave laws, while providing employees with a worker-friendly benefits package. Second, and maybe most notably, it would do so without resorting to the use of an overly burdensome and inflexible federal mandate. And third, if an employer chose to offer his or her employees a qualifying paid leave plan, then that employer and those employees would enjoy uniform and robust plans no matter where the employer is located, without the threat of state and local regulation.

The *Workflex in the 21st Century Act* is a win-win for businesses and their employees, and provides Americans with the flexibility they desire when it comes to striking the right work-life balance.

I am pleased to welcome our distinguished witnesses with us here today as we discuss this important and timely legislation, and I look forward to hearing from them as we explore the topic of paid leave in the 21st century workplace.

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