COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION & WORKFORCE
CHAIRMAN TIM WALBERG

COMMITTEE STATEMENT

Opening Statement of Rep. Ryan Mackenzie (R-PA)
Workforce Protections Subcommittee Hearing
Balancing Careers and Care: Examining Innovative Approaches to Paid Leave
February 24, 2026

(As prepared for delivery)

Today's hearing will examine the many issues and challenges of our country's paid family leave landscape. While the *Family and Medical Leave Act* (FMLA) determines when an employee is entitled to unpaid leave to care for a new child or a sick loved one, or to undergo medical treatment, there is currently no federal law that outlines paid leave benefits.

This is an issue that is personal to me, and I'm sure many others on this committee. In the last two years, my wife and I have seen firsthand the challenges of raising a young family. Right now, my wife is able to watch over our newborn daughter because of her company's paid family leave policy, and we know that this practice makes an important difference for many in our community. Unfortunately, paid family leave has been out of reach for millions of Americans who are hoping to grow their families.

According to the latest figures from Department of Labor (DOL), only 27 percent of private sector workers in the United States have access to paid family leave benefits through their employer. This might be why we've seen growing momentum at the state level to provide tools for employers wishing to offer more paid leave to employees. In fact, more than 20 states and the District of Columbia have enacted paid leave programs that allow employers to access private insurance and offer paid leave to their workers. During my time as a Pennsylvania State Representative, I was able to work on this issue–drafting legislation to create a tax credit to support paid family leave.

While these state innovations are encouraging, it has been difficult for state administrators and private-sector benefits managers to navigate the patchwork of paid leave policies across different states. While one program may work in Maryland, Alabama likely has its own workforce challenges to manage. One state's approach should not be forced upon another's workforce, or vice versa.

That's why we appreciate the Trump administration resuming its longstanding practice of issuing DOL opinion letters, which provide answers to real-world questions and help employers comply with the FMLA and the *Fair Labor Standards Act*.

It's also why the House Bipartisan Paid Leave Working Group was created. Representatives Stephanie Bice and Chrissy Houlahan have been working alongside other working group Members to produce a common-sense, bipartisan proposal at the federal level to improve paid leave.

Last year, Representatives Bice and Houlahan introduced H.R. 3089, the *More Paid Leave for More Americans Act*, which builds on years of the working group's efforts. The bill rests on several pillars, including establishing a public-private partnership and incentivizing coordination and harmonization of paid leave benefits across states through an Interstate Paid Leave Action Network, or I-PLAN.

While there is no silver bullet solution to the many paid leave access challenges facing the American workforce, H.R. 3089 is an important attempt to coordinate state-level programs without dampening the flame of innovation with clumsy federal mandates. Together with policies like the paid family and medical leave tax credit for employers–which was made permanent through the Working Families Tax Cuts–these policies offer a commonsense roadmap for federal action on this issue. I thank the working group members for their efforts.

We have expert witnesses joining us today who will be able to describe some of these challenges and shed light on potential solutions that this Committee may consider. I look forward to hearing their testimony.