Statement of Carolyn Maloney, Vice Chair
Joint Economic Committee – Oversight and Government Reform,
Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce Hearing
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Good morning. I would like to thank Chairman Davis for holding this hearing with the Joint Economic Committee on the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2007. This is a critical issue for federal employees and their families and I want to thank the witnesses for taking the time to testify here 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 and they can't afford to forgo pay for any length of time.

Experts in child development tell us that mothers need time to recover from childbirth and that mothers and fathers alike need time to care for and bond with a new baby. All Americans have the right to job-protected leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act. But the United States is the *only* industrialized country that does not ensure paid family leave for all workers.

In fact, a recent report by the Government Accountability Office, that I requested, shows that the United States lags far behind other industrialized countries in providing policies that help families balance the competing demands of work and family responsibilities. The European Union requires that member countries offer a minimum of 14 weeks of paid maternity leave as a basic employment standard, but most countries offer *more* than the minimum.

Federal workers, like many U.S. workers, do not have access to paid parental leave, so they are forced to choose between their paycheck and their new child. Federal employees who become new parents do have the option of using their accrued sick days and vacation time or tapping into a "leave bank". This may work for the lucky families who never get sick, never need a vacation, and are happy to rely on the kindness of strangers. But, as one of our witnesses will tell us this morning, even the best-prepared workers face difficult choices when children need their care.

As our nation's largest employer, the federal government should be leading the way in providing a family-friendly work environment, but it's not. The Joint Economic Committee released a report yesterday, that I requested, which shows that the federal government lags far behind *Fortune* 100 companies in providing paid family leave as part of their benefits package. You can read the report on my website, www.maloney.house.gov. *Fortune* 100 firms overwhelmingly offer new mothers paid leave lasting six to eight weeks long.

Yet, the federal government has no family leave policy beyond FMLA. With only 319 days left of the Bush Administration, the President's Office of Management and Personnel is here today to tell us only about their plan for a short-term disability program, but this plan falls far short of being a paid family leave policy.

The lack of paid family leave puts federal agencies at a disadvantage when competing for the best and the brightest employees. Our federal workforce is aging, as agencies have found it difficult to recruit and retain younger workers. Providing paid parental leave would encourage younger workers who may be considering having a family to stay with the federal government.

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

In the absence of a federal paid leave program, California and Washington have passed paid family leave laws, and New Jersey and New York have bills pending before their legislatures.
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When we pass HR 3799, over 2.6 million workers in the United States will have the right to paid parental leave, and we will be setting a standard for the rest of the nation to follow.

 Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this important hearing.

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