

Sample Worker Testimony in Support of Caregiver Anti-Discrimination Bill

Good Morning. Thank you for this opportunity to share my story with you today.

My name is Alma Farias, and I am a mother of four children. My youngest, Ruby, is two-and-a-half years old. She was born 17 weeks prematurely and has been diagnosed with the most severe form of cerebral palsy. Doctors gave her a 2% chance of survival, and she was kept in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit for almost eight months after she was born. Ruby is Spastic quadriplegic, breathes through a tracheostomy, is dependent on a ventilator, and requires 24-hour specialized care to live.

When Ruby was born, I was working full-time as a branch manager for a highly successful company. I was a loyal employee and was good at my job. I even received a company-wide award for having the highest billing branch in the company. I worked all day and visited Ruby in the NICU every night until she was discharged.

Though my performance didn't change, my supervisors' perception of me did. I had to use my hard earned sick time and PTO to take Ruby to doctor's appointments and specialist visits. I was always afraid of asking for this time off because my bosses would make comments and would complain about me to co-workers behind my back. I was fired around Christmas in 2019.

I was humiliated, ashamed, and constantly anxious about how I would provide for my children. There were times where the grief was so powerful, that I almost lost the will to live. But I love my children and I knew I needed to provide for them.

I finally found another job in March 2020, as a HR manager. I was so grateful to be employed. I could tell my co-workers and managers respected me and valued my experience.

Then, our afternoon nurse who took care of Ruby suddenly stopped working for us because of COVID. Its challenging for me to find adequate care for Ruby. I can only leave her with trained professionals who have trach experience and can monitor her health conditions. So I called off those days and said I could not come in. I had no other choice.

This was the beginning of the end at my new job. My boss was obviously annoyed. She also retaliated against me by denying me permission to work remotely, even though everyone else was working remotely. It's like they were asking me to prove I would put them before my child. I needed the job so I continued to go to the office, even though Ruby's pulmonologist said it was risky because of her lung conditions.

This was not enough, and I was fired again. I was fired twice in the first two years of my daughter's life because I love her and care for her.

I did everything that was asked of me at both of these jobs: I went above and beyond to be able to work, and also to have proper nursing care for Ruby. However, my nurses are humans as

well. That doesn't make me any less devoted to my jobs, but it makes my employers more likely to fire me. I have learned this difficult lesson since Ruby was born.

I was so happy to hear about this bill being proposed because this bill would change my life, and many others in situations like mine. I hope my story helps you understand how necessary it is. Thank you for your time.