

**EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE**

**Congressman George Miller, Chairman**

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**Chairwoman Woolsey Statement at Subcommittee Hearing On  
“Balancing Work and Family: What Policies Best Support  
American Families”**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Lynn Woolsey(D-CA), chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections, for a subcommittee hearing on “Balancing Work and Family: What Policies Best Support American Families”*

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I want to thank everyone for coming here today for what I hope will be the first of a series of hearings before this Subcommittee on balancing work and family.

This is a very important topic and a serious one for our country, because most of us work.

And our lives revolve around work and family.

That was certainly the case with me.

I was a single mother raising four children and worked full-time at first as the sole breadwinner and then after a second marriage.

And it was hard.

I was also a human resource professional for 20 years, so I not only know how hard the balance was for me, but how hard it was for the people I dealt with over the years.

Today, in about 80 percent of families with 2-parents, both parents work.

And 75 percent of all mothers – single and married – are in the workplace today.

Parents work long hours and commute long distances to put food on the table, and too often they aren't there to sit down and eat with their kids.

As a result, balancing work and family has become a real challenge.

This is made all the more difficult because of the lack of “family-friendly” policies in this country.

And by “family-friendly,” I am talking about paid sick and family medical leave, affordable child care and flexible schedules to name a few.

To appreciate the uphill battle faced by working families, listen to some of these statistics:

- 46 million people lack health care coverage in this country, including 9 million children--or 12 percent of all children in this country;
- At least 40,000 children each day go home to an empty house when school is over for lack of after-school programs;
- Only 28 percent of full-time workers have flexible schedules that allow them to vary the time that they begin and end work; and
- One-half of private sector employees in this country do not have a single day of paid sick leave.

Our country, while great in many ways, is stuck in a time warp when it comes to providing workers with help in balancing work and family.

And it lags far behind other countries in this arena.

It is a shame too, because studies have told us that “family-friendly” policies work.

They increase recruitment and retention rates, decrease absenteeism and improve productivity.

For example, Corporate Voices for Working Families did a study on work flexibility and found that workers with flexible work schedules were 50 percent more committed to their work and 30 percent less likely to leave their current employment within a 2-year period.

There are many good employers in this country who realize that “family-friendly policies” actually help, not hurt their bottom line.

Bank of America has a program that reimburses workers for child care.

It has found that workers who use the program are twice as likely to stay with the company as those that do not.

And KPMG, the company that Ms. Wankoff – one of our witnesses here today – works for has great benefits for workers, including backup care for children and elderly relatives.

And KPMG’s retention rates are up.

But more good employers need to step up to the plate, and we in Congress and other parts of government have very important roles to play in making sure our workers can balance their lives.

That is why I have introduced the Balancing Act, which puts into place a whole host of “family-friendly” policies, such as paid family medical leave, benefits for part-time workers, improved

child care for families, universal voluntary pre-school, before and after school programs, school meals, and a pilot program to explore telecommuting.

That is why Representative DeLauro has introduced her Healthy Families Act, which will provide workers with 7 days of paid sick leave to care for their own medical needs or the needs of a family member.

And that is why others have introduced legislation to make the workplace more “family-friendly.”

Again thank you for coming today and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

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