

Written Testimony of  
Barbara Wankoff  
KPMG LLP  
House Committee on Education and Labor  
Workforce Protections Subcommittee  
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Good Afternoon. My name is Barbara Wankoff and I am KPMG LLP's National Director of Workplace Solutions. I am responsible for the firm's work life benefits and programs supporting our goal to be an employer of choice.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify before you today.

KPMG, a tax, audit and advisory firm employing over 20,000 employees and 1700 partners in the United States believes that helping employees manage their responsibilities both inside and outside of work is beneficial to everyone, and to our bottom line. Our policies and programs support this belief.

Our employees tend to be ambitious and career oriented. They want to develop professionally and build a career, but they also have lives as parents, sons or daughters and spouses -- so at KPMG we are promoting a culture of flexibility to help them manage the complexities of work and life.

For example, among the many benefits we offer is generous paid time off. Employees have a minimum of 20 paid days they can use for vacation, sick time, sick children or any other personal need.

We recognize the critical need for new mothers to bond with their children, so we allow them to take up to 26 weeks of leave, going beyond FMLA, while guaranteeing that their job will be waiting when they return. And this applies to births, adoptions or foster care placement. And by paying women 100% of their regular salary for up to eight weeks, as well as additional weeks at two-thirds pay, we are making it easier for women to take the time off that they want. New fathers also receive 2 weeks of paid parental leave.

We try to ease the transition for new mothers coming back to work by providing privacy rooms for breastfeeding and allowing them to phase in their return to work instead of jumping back in fulltime.

Other leave programs are also available and one we're particularly proud of is a program called shared leave, which allows an employee caring for a seriously ill relative, and who has exhausted their personal time, to request an additional 12 weeks paid time off that is donated by fellow employees. This program is a Godsend for those facing difficult times and who need additional time off.

We know, from study after study, that allowing for flexible work schedules can reduce stress, and boost productivity and job satisfaction. That's why KPMG offers a range of such programs, including flextime, compressed work week, telecommuting, job sharing, reduced workloads, part time work and day to day flexibility where employees can leave the workplace to attend a school or sports event or doctor's appointment and return later to resume work. .

To further support working parents at KPMG, we contract with third-party providers to offer free back-up childcare for the inevitable emergencies when the sitter is sick or bad weather closes the daycare center. It's a tremendous relief for parents to know they have access to safe, reliable backup care in these situations and can meet both their work and family obligations. Similar backup care is available to those caring for elderly relatives, even if the relative lives in a distant city.

Oftentimes, solid, timely information is what parents need to meet a challenge. That's why we provide a resource and referral program that makes it easy for them to gain information about such topics as parenting, wellness, and emotional wellbeing.

We also recognize that approximately one in five families in the US has a child with special needs and that parents of these children have unique challenges. To support these families, we established a KPMG network, which provides resources, information and a chance to connect and support one another.

Our commitment to a culture of flexibility and to helping working families has not gone unnoticed. KPMG has earned a spot on Working Mother Media's List of 100 Best Companies for Working Mothers ten times; we have made the Companies that Care Honor Roll four times, and this past year, Fortune Magazine named KPMG one of the 100 Best Companies to Work For in 2007.

Collectively, the programs I've described meet the needs of both our employees and our business. They demonstrate that we care about our employees and are committed to helping them balance work and life. These programs help us attract and retain key talent, which is critical to meeting clients' needs and to the overall success of the firm. At KPMG, retention rates and morale are up. Thank you for this opportunity to share KPMG's views with you today.