



**TESTIMONY FROM WHITETHORN DIGITAL**

**IN SUPPORT OF SB 580: THE FAMILY CARE ACT**

***Submitted to the Pennsylvania Senate Labor & Industry Committee***

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By

Dr. Matthew M. White

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***About Whitethorn Digital:***

*Whitethorn Digital is an indie game publisher located in Erie, Pennsylvania, with a hard focus on approachable games that can be played in pieces, that require no special skills or knowledge, and that anyone can pick up and play. We're fierce defenders of accessibility, inclusion, and widening the audience that can play games. We like to consider ourselves the defenders of easy games. Whitethorn Digital also promotes diversity and inclusion in both the games we produce and the developers we employ, focusing on people of color, women, and the LGBTQ+ community.*

To the esteemed members of the Pennsylvania Senate Labor & Industry Committee:

My name is Dr. Matthew White. I am the Managing Director of Whitethorn Digital in Erie, Pennsylvania. I am an employer in a very working-class and family-oriented part of Pennsylvania. I am a husband and a father with a second child due in August. I am a son with an aging mother who requires frequent medical visits, and I am a supporter of the Family Care Act.

As the owner of a small business, this is a vital piece of legislation. I cannot afford-- literally-- to pay for my employees to be absent, as much as I value their physical and mental well-being. By passing this legislation, you will allow small business owners like me to give employees extended leave for themselves and their loved ones while also giving them peace of mind knowing that they will be provided for.

Beyond my professional perspective, I have a personal stake in this legislation. As I stated, I am a husband and a father. My wife and I are currently expecting our second child in August 2020, and our son McClain was born in September 2018. My wife is a high school teacher in Harborcreek, Pennsylvania. While the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) did guarantee that she would not lose her job during her maternity leave, it also did not provide us with that sorely missing income. Fortunately, my wife had accrued enough sick days to allow her to spend six paid weeks at home with our son before returning to work; and fortunately, she had an easy pregnancy and labor. I worry about what would have happened had there been any complications and wonder what will happen with the birth of our second child.

We have friends who have had Caesarean sections which require eight weeks of recovery time. We have friends who have had premature babies requiring stays in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). We have friends who have had children diagnosed with life-threatening diseases requiring hospital stays. We have been lucky, but luck is **all** that separates us from days, weeks, even months of missed work, missed paychecks, and missed bills.

While this is a personal and emotional appeal, there are also economic implications. Research from the National Partnership for Women and Families has shown that support systems like SB 580 reduce the burden on social assistance programs by reducing the likelihood of lost jobs among vulnerable populations, reducing overall budgetary load on local, state, and federal governments.<sup>1</sup>

Please for the sake of my employees, for the sake of my family, and for the sake of Pennsylvanians everywhere, pass the Family Care Act.

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<https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-sick-days/paid-sick-days-good-for-business-and-workers.pdf>