

**Testimony of Tori Snyder
Field Hearing on Caregiving Across the Lifespan
Chairman Bob Casey
August 7, 2024**

Good morning! I am Tori Snyder, a single mom to a terrific son, Braxton, who is about to start first grade. We live here in Pittsburgh and I'm a proud member of MomsRising.

I want to start by saying thank you, Senator Casey, for organizing this hearing and for all you do to improve support for caregivers. It truly means the world to moms like me. I appreciate the chance to share my family's story.

I am a sandwich generation mom with sole physical and financial responsibility for my son. Over the past several years, I've also provided care for my mother and my late grandmother.

Juggling care for a young child and my aging relatives has been an enormous challenge – financially and emotionally. These challenges are much worse because lawmakers have failed to ensure working people can access paid leave and quality, affordable child care and elder care.

The beginning of the pandemic was an especially hard time for my family. During COVID, Braxton was diagnosed on the autism spectrum. He needs occupational, speech, and behavioral therapy each week. My grandma got COVID and spent months going in and out of the hospital. My mom also spent time in the hospital. I had no money coming in as I lost my job when COVID happened and couldn't even look for a job because I had no one to watch Braxton. It was an extremely scary time, filled with a lot of worries about what tomorrow would bring.

Because of the unknown, and needing flexibility with my schedule for Braxton's needs, I started a business, Self-Care Señorita, and worked as a small business coach and DEI consultant.

During all this, my biggest fear was what would happen if I got COVID, or worse, an injury that would cause me to not be able to work. I couldn't get sick, and I couldn't get hurt because if I did, I wouldn't be able to work – and then what would happen to my family? Those what-ifs haunted me every day.

Thankfully, Braxton's preschool finally reopened. Having child care again was a relief and allowed me to work more hours. But it cost \$800 per month – a big portion of my take-home pay.

Last year, Braxton started kindergarten, and I took a full-time job so he and I could have medical benefits. But I'm still struggling with child care outside of school hours. At first, I tried enrolling him in an after-school program. But that program was expensive and ultimately, we just couldn't afford it. So instead, I interrupt my workday each afternoon to pick him up from school, which is stressful. In order to get my work hours in, I log in before I take him to school, pause, take him

to school, work, pause again, get him from school and then work hours in the evenings; it's exhausting trying to manage it all.

My new job also does not provide paid leave. I still worry about what would happen if my mother or son were to be sick. I have to save all of my paid time off for a what-if scenario instead of using it for vacation time with my family or even for my own sick days.

Unfortunately, I know so many parents and caregivers can relate to these challenges. Here in Pennsylvania, about two-thirds of us don't have access to any paid leave through our employers, to care for our kids, ourselves, or our aging loved ones. About 60 percent of us live in child care deserts – and for kids under 5, care costs nearly as much as public college tuition.

These challenges have limited my income and my career opportunities – and I know so many moms who can say the same. When working people like me can't fully utilize our skills, that's bad for businesses and our overall economy.

As I've juggled these responsibilities over the years, I often feel like I'm running in 1,000 directions at once. Sandwich generation caregivers like me are struggling with burnout and exhaustion. I joined MomsRising because I know the only way we'll see progress is if we all raise our voices. So, I will never stop using my voice to tell lawmakers to invest in the care infrastructure working families need, with paid leave for all, affordable high-quality child care, elder care, and disability care, and an expanded Child Tax Credit. Senator Casey, thank you for having our backs in this fight.