



JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE
SENATOR CHARLES E. SCHUMER, CHAIRMAN
REPRESENTATIVE CAROLYN B. MALONEY, VICE CHAIR



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 14, 2007

Contacts: Israel Klein (JEC)
(202) 224-5171 or
Meghan O'Shaughnessy (Maloney)
(202) 225-7944

WORK-FAMILY POLICIES FROM ABROAD WOULD BENEFIT U.S. ECONOMY, WORKERS, AND FAMILIES JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE HEARING FINDS

*GAO Report Released at JEC Hearing Shows U.S. Lags Far Behind Other
Industrial Nations in Supporting Working Families*

*Maloney, Dingell, Schumer, Reed Urged GAO to Examine Child Care, Family
Leave, and Flex Time Programs in U.S. and Around the World*

Washington, DC - The United States lags behind other industrialized nations in supporting working families, witnesses told **Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney** (D-NY), Vice-Chair of the Joint Economic Committee (JEC), today during a hearing, "Importing Success: Why Work-Family Policies from Abroad Make Economic Sense for the U.S." The report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) was requested jointly by Maloney, **John Dingell** (D-MI), **Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee**, **Sen. Chuck Schumer** (D-NY), **Chairman of the Joint Economic Committee**, and **Sen. Jack Reed** (D-RI).

Maloney convened the hearing to examine the need for family-friendly work policies, such as paid family leave time, increased access to quality child care, and flexible work schedules. Stronger work-family policies in other developed countries allow more women to work, enhance employers' profitability, and improve overall economic productivity. Family-friendly work policies also help employers recruit and retain workers, significantly reducing the costs of employee turnover and retraining.

"The U.S. is failing its working families. American parents work longer hours and get less time off than parents in other countries," said Maloney. **"Balanced work-family policies are a win-win - they help create stable families, a productive workforce, and positive economic outcomes."**

Sen. Schumer said, "If we're going to continue to lead the world in trade and economic policies, we need to revamp sub par work-family programs here at home. The GAO report reveals a tough road for many families to balance work and family life, yet we know the

right work-family balance is critical for families and the U.S. economy to protect our economic leadership.”

"The GAO findings show us that the U.S. is behind many other countries in public and corporate policy that fosters a productive work-family relationship," Rep. Dingell said. "Indeed, policies that balance work and family life will help our overall economy to produce workers that are compensated well, lead healthy lifestyles and enjoy the work they do. I hope that these findings will encourage U.S. businesses, and the Congress, to create policies with our working families in mind."

At today's hearing, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) presented findings from a new report on policies used abroad to help workers - especially women - balance the competing demands of employment and care-giving responsibilities. While American families often send both parents to work and spend more time at work than parents in other countries, the U.S. lags far behind other countries in providing paid leave or flexible schedules for care-giving responsibilities.

Expert witnesses at today's hearing included:

- Kay Brown, Acting Director of Education, Workforce, and Income Security, GAO
- Janet Gornick, Professor of Political Science, Baruch College, City University of New York, Director of the Luxembourg Income Study, and the co-author of *Families That Work*
- Ellen Bravo, Coordinator, the Multi-State Working Families Consortium, former Director of 9to5, and the author of *Taking on the Big Boys*
- Laura Wallace, Director of the Work Life Program, Statistical Analysis Software Co.)
- Tim Kane, Director, Center for International Trade and Economics, Heritage Foundation.

"Parents in all countries face competing demands on their time. But American families struggle more than families elsewhere - in part because American public policy offers less help to them than what's available for working families in many other countries," Gornick testified. "We'd do well to draw some lessons from the collective experience of many of our neighbors across the Atlantic."

"Our bottom line savings from investing in our people has been estimated to be \$75 million annually. In turn, those savings help improve our profitability as a company. Just as important, people represent the company's principal and certainly most important 'asset,'" Wallace said.

"We hear a lot of talk about family values and personal responsibility. And yet, in the United States today, being a good family member can put your job or your health at risk," said Bravo. "Employers can do a lot by implementing effective practices, many of which cost little or nothing and all of which strengthen the bottom line."

The Joint Economic Committee, established under the Employment Act of 1946, was created by Congress to review economic conditions and to analyze the effectiveness of economic policy.

www.jec.senate.gov

#

