

**TESTIMONY OF MISSY QUARBERG BEFORE  
THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON WORKFORCE PROTECTIONS  
“BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY: WHAT POLICIES BEST SUPPORT  
AMERICAN FAMILIES”  
June 21, 2007**

I want to thank the Subcommittee for inviting me to testify today on the subject of balancing work and family. I know a little bit about that subject. I am married with 2 young children, ages 3 and 5. Both my children are developmentally delayed and need special care. This means going to the doctor and therapy for them often.

Last year, I went to work at Wal-Mart. We needed the money and were looking at buying a house. I also felt that it was important for me to work. My starting pay was \$7.30 an hour as a cashier. When I left Wal-Mart 10 months later I was making \$8.30 and working in the optical department as an optician.

In 2005 before I started at Wal-Mart, the company implemented a series of policies designed to push out full-time, tenured workers and replace them with “healthier” workers in order to drastically cut its benefit costs. Since then, Wal-Mart has implemented a series of policies that serve these purposes and have made it increasingly difficult for me and other Wal-Mart workers to balance work and family.

For example, Wal-Mart has a policy called “opening availability scheduling,” which means that you have to work changing schedules whenever Wal-Mart wants it.

It also has a restrictive attendance policy, which penalizes you if you need to take a day off from work for medical, family or other reasons. After you have taken 3 days off when you were scheduled to work, you run the risk of losing your job.

Initially, I worked evenings on the 3-11 shift. While this took me away from my family in the evenings, this allowed me to save on child care since my husband could be home in at night to take care of the children. When I started as an optician, this shift was no longer available to me and so I had to work from 1-9.

Of course this increased my child care costs. And because of the Company's restrictive attendance policies, and the fact that I had no paid sick leave available to me, it was very difficult for me to take time out to tend to my children's needs.

One time my daughter had a cavity and I gave my supervisor more than 3 days notice that I needed a couple of hours off to take her to the dentist. While at the dentist, it was discovered that my daughter needed an emergency root canal. My daughter who is very young was not feeling well afterward so I had to call into my work to tell them I was taking the entire day off. When I got back to work my supervisor scolded me for not giving her enough advance notice, and I was penalized under Wal-Mart's attendance policy. My supervisor told me that in the future, I needed to plan these things more in advance. How could I possibly plan my children's sudden health problems in advance?

I was very concerned about taking any days off, so if my children were sick, I often took them to the child care provider even though I knew I should stay home with them. And when I was sick, I usually went to work anyway.

Many of my co-workers had similar problems taking care of family and doing their job, especially with regards to taking care of their children when they were sick, and having scheduling problems with dropping off and picking up their children at day care or school.

I ultimately chose to leave my job at Wal-Mart because when I factored in my child care expenses with my salary, it wasn't cost effective for me to continue working. I plan to look for a new job, which I hope will provide some benefits so that I am able to work again and contribute to my family.

My employer---Wal-Mart---used to talk about family values, but my employer did not seem to care about family. No worker, no father, no mother should have to choose between their job and their family. No company, including the company I worked for, should want that.

I hope that this Subcommittee will continue to do something to help working people, especially working mothers. We need policies like paid sick and family leave, flexible working hours and help with child care so that we can do both our jobs: to take care of our family and to hold down a job.