

FAMILIES VALUED

Newsletter

Dear friends,

As a single woman in my twenties, I am often met with surprise when I talk about my passion for the flourishing of families. I don't have children, and my parents are located about three hours south of my tiny studio apartment in Alexandria, VA. From the outside, my life would appear detached from what most people consider to be a 'family' unit. So why am I so invested in improving the public policies and social safety nets that impact families? I normally go into a monologue about how the testimony of caregivers and my role as an aunt opened my eyes to the unique needs of families. Over the years, I have served primarily as a listener, being transformed by the witness of mothers, children of aging parents, spouses of sick partners, and my siblings as they grappled with the difficulty of welcoming new children into the world.

In the last two months, my role as a listener quickly shifted into one of a caregiver. With one phone call, my listening became reality. My father was in the ICU and my sister-in-law was going into labor. My head was buzzing with hundreds of different questions. How could I be in two hospitals at once? What if my father is permanently disabled? Who will support my mother? If he dies, how will we be okay? How do I hop on a work call as if nothing is wrong when my entire family is in a state of panic? Will I need to move back home to be a caregiver? What will happen to my dad's small business? How do I support my brother, who is trying to bring a new child into the world while fearing for the life of his father? The only thing I knew for sure was that I needed to find a way to get to my family as quickly as possible. For me, that meant hopping in a car to drive south for a few hours, because I had a luxury that my siblings and my parents did not, Paid Family and Medical Leave.



Madi and her dad before a Dallas Cowboys Game

With one call to my supervisor, I was able to shift my responsibilities and create a plan to ensure I would be able to focus on my family. Paid Family and Medical Leave didn't make an impossible hard situation easy, but it enabled me to fulfill my role as daughter and sister without having to worry about what emails needed to be sent or what reports needed to be filed. The often complicated nature of family shouldn't be surprising. As anyone who is rooted in a family knows, complicated is the normal condition of families. I was surprised by how many of my friends could relate to a family emergency like mine. So why do we treat caregiving for family members as such a surprise? We are often caught unprepared to pause the normal rhythms of our lives to care for the ones who cared for us. Paid Family Leave acknowledges the complex needs of families and the normal condition of our fragility.

Resurrection week fell right in the middle of my family emergency. I was transitioning into thinking about how long-term caregiving might look for me and my family. I spent some time reflecting on Jesus's seven last phrases before the Crucifixion. The one I kept coming back to was "When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home" (vv. 26-27). In his last hours, Jesus ensured his mother was cared for by his disciples. What a powerful indicator of where our priorities should be. Everybody should be able to fulfill their responsibilities to their family without the fear of losing their job or risking their income source. Paid Family Leave and Paid Medical Leave are essential for this to become possible.

Today, my family is more than two months removed from the day when our world turned upside down. My father improves every day, and my niece is a healthy eight-week-old who sleeps through the night. But every time I hear my phone, I still panic. Anxiety and worry become close friends when you have sick family members, but nobody should have to worry about their job on top of fearing for the lives of their loved ones. If you would like to know more about how to advance Paid Family Leave in the United States please read the [Families Valued Common Ground Proposal for Paid Family Leave](#).

Peace and Grace,



Madi Allen
Advocacy Manager, CPJ



Madi's dad and nephew

Overcoming Fear and Advocating with Courage

What stops you from advocating for the issues you are passionate about? It may be the fear that an individual voice won't matter, the fear of breaking away from a political tribe, or the lack of expertise to advocate for change.

No matter what the reason, advocating for yourself, your family, and those in your community on the margins takes courage.

Toni Collier, author of *Brave Enough to be Broken*, joined us on April 11 to share her own story of courage as a single mom.

View the recording below for practical steps for being honest about suffering while pushing forward for change.



The graphic is a blue rectangular banner with a white border. On the left side, there is a square portrait of Toni Collier, a woman with long dark hair, wearing a black jacket, smiling and looking slightly to the right. To the right of the portrait, the text is arranged vertically. At the top, the title "COURAGE IN THE FACE OF HOPELESSNESS" is written in white, all-caps, serif font. Below the title, the text "A Community Call of the Center for Public Justice's Families Valued Program" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. Underneath that, the date and time "Thursday, April 11, 12-1pm ET" is displayed in the same white, sans-serif font. At the bottom left of the banner, the name "TONI COLLIER" is written in white, all-caps, sans-serif font, followed by her credentials "Author, Speaker, and Founder of Broken Crayons Still Color" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

Share Your Story on Paid Family Leave

Celebrate Mother's Day by sharing your story! **Have you experienced the support of paid family leave? Have you found yourself in need of paid family leave in significant life moments?** Let's honor mothers and advocate for supportive policies together. You can share your story by filling out [this Google Form](#).

The responses will be shared on our social media channels. You can choose to share your story anonymously.

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