NIH LEAVE BANK SUCCESS STORIES

The following are real success stories from NIH Leave Bank Recipients. They were submitted to encourage others to participate in this important benefit. All stories are presented anonymously and may have been edited to maintain anonymity and/or for clarity/length.

- 1) My experience with the NIH Leave Bank was fantastic from beginning to end! The customer service that was that I receive was superb. When having to take extended leave, it is a relief not think about your leave or if you will have sufficient leave coverage. I was on extended leave before the Leave Bank was available, I used advanced leave and also relied on VLTP donations. While I did receive adequate coverage, I came back to work with a negative leave balance. This left me having to work months before I accrued leave. With the leave bank, I received all of the leave that was required and was able to earn leave at a prorated amount. I feel very fortunate to be a part of an organization that continues to work for the advancement of the welfare of their employees.
- 2) I needed to be out for maternity leave for the birth of my son. As a new employee I did not have enough sick or annual leave available to cover the standard 6 weeks of maternity leave I was going to need. I could not afford to take leave without pay and did not feel I knew enough people to receive voluntary leave from other employees using that program. I heard about the Leave Bank program and joined as soon as I read about it. The Leave Bank provided me the necessary leave to cover the 8 weeks leave I needed for the caesarian section birth I ended up having. This program was wonderful; I don't know what I would have done without it! I think this program is a great benefit to new employees and to any employee that has not accrued sufficient time for needed leave. I recommend joining to everyone!
- 3) I'm 71 years old and still work at NCI because I love my job. This is the second time I have had breast cancer. The first time, 10 years ago, was a pretty simple course of therapy and I was able to work most of the time. This time my breast cancer experience has been much more difficult. I had four different individual cancers in one breast. This is very rare. Because of this, I had to undergo six rounds of one of the harshest chemotherapies followed by extensive surgery to be sure all the breast tissue and tumor tissue was removed. Today I visited my chemotherapy group for follow-up and they all were just so excited about how well I am doing. Now I am undergoing 28 days of radiation treatments. Dealing with my treatments for breast cancer without worrying over having enough leave or having to drive an hour each way to and from work has been such a blessing. Now I'm about to finish radiation treatments but have had to request further leave because of delay between chemotherapy and the surgery and delay before starting radiation therapy. I'm having to do physical therapy but will be able to schedule it early so I can still arrive at work on time. Time will if the breast cancer returns but my clinicians say that chance of reoccurrence is greatly reduced. I'm feeling really confident that I

will have a good, long life. I can't say enough Thank You, Thank You, Thank Yous to all the people who donated to the NIH Leave Bank.

- 4) Even though I am somewhat of a lexicologist I cannot come up with sufficient words to express my thanks to the Leave Bank for what they have done. I had severe back pain for months and had to have surgery which resulted in a seven-hour operation with the insertion of six screws and two rods in my back. I had not expected the post-operative recuperation to be so debilitating and lengthy. I was out of the office for three months and then was able to return on a part-time basis only. I had used all of my annual and sick leave within a short time and the Leave Bank took over. I don't have any other income so if I had not been a member of the Leave Bank, the likely consequences would have been shattering. Certainly, I would have incurred serious debt or I might have even lost my home. It's too horrible to even imagine what might have happened but for the Leave Bank.
- When the opportunity became available, I joined the Leave Bank, thinking it was a great benefit. As the New Year approached I began to feel sluggish during work-outs and had an extreme pain in my leg. After a few days of enduring the leg pain and then coming down with what I thought was the flu, I decided it was time to be seen by a doctor. My trip to the ER proved that I was suffering from a Pulmonary Embolism. I was immediately admitted into the hospital until I was stable and then released to recover at home. After a week of being out of work, my supervisor and I discussed my having joined the Leave Bank in December and she began assisting me by starting the application process. My health condition worsened over the course of the month and the Leave Bank Office was able to address all my questions which really put me at ease during the application process. Today, I am recovering well, with medication. The Leave Bank, in conjunction with my supervisor and colleagues support, totally changed my outlook about this situation. My timekeeper, supervisors, and VLTP liaison were kept in the loop about approvals of leave and when the leave was added to my ITAS account, so that I didn't have to worry about sending emails or wonder who should be notified of this confidential process. The Leave Bank allowed me to not stress about my pay or being away from the office. This benefit along with the support of colleagues definitely contributed to my healing, and I will forever be grateful for having this benefit and my IC signing up to participate in this program!
- 6) I became a member of the NIH Leave Bank because I liked the concept of pooling together leave that could collectively be used by its members who found themselves dealing with a medical emergency while lacking insufficient leave balances. I also envisioned myself being a member for as long as I worked in anticipation of one day contributing my (use or lose) balances to the program.

When I joined I had leave and did not anticipate a medical emergency anytime soon. However, when it happened, I immediately reached out to the staff and they were most helpful in every aspect of the process. In addition, because all the required forms (and instructions) were all easily accessible on the NIH Leave Bank's website, the application process went very smoothly.

I also found that while I was on leave, I was actually still accruing leave which resulted in my really not needing to use as much from the Leave Bank and also meant that when I returned to work, it didn't take long for me to begin building up my leave balances.

Overall, the experience was very pleasant during a time when I was concerned about both my medical procedure, my recuperation and my transition back to work; so I cannot stress enough how beneficial the NIH Leave Program is to NIH employees facing a medical emergency. So for those that may question if it is a good idea to join, I can tell you firsthand that is absolutely a good idea to join and I highly recommend the NIH Leave Bank program!

- 7) I can't tell you how much I appreciate your help with this and this program! I've worked for the government for over 33 years now and not only am I "still" working full-time, I've been blessed with raising my 4 yr. old granddaughter and my 11 yr. old grandson. When I had to also live with back pain, it was so much harder...but thanks to this program, I've been able to comfortably take the time to get the surgery I desperately needed and recover with the best chance of success! The NIH is one of the best places to work for. Thanks again!
- 8) I am a Veteran and knew I would need to have both knees replaced. I saved up my leave for a whole year, so I could get paid while I was recovering (6-8 weeks). By the second knee, the Leave Bank had been put in place and I signed up. It was good not to have to save up my leave, because I had numerous doctor appointments to prepare for surgery. It was good to focus on my recovery, instead of worrying about getting paid. I have recommended the Leave Bank to fellow employees. I think it is a good program. Thanks.
- 9) The Leave Bank allowed me to recover from an unexpected cesarean section. I was able to recover without the additional stress of losing pay. The Leave Bank is well worth the personal investment.
- 10) I utilized the NIH Leave Bank during my most recent maternity leave; the program allowed me to stay home a full six weeks without worry to care for and nurture my new baby. I truly appreciate the NIH community for donating leave to this worthwhile program which allows working mothers to spend vital time with their newborn babies. Thank you!
- 11) I quickly signed up for the Leave Bank during the open enrollment season. Giving up a little leave to have more security was well worth it. A short two years later I found myself pregnant while also recovering from bladder cancer. As a new federal employee, I had not yet accumulated enough leave to fully recover from childbirth or to take the required time off work to see my urologist concerning my bladder cancer. With the help of the Leave Bank I did not have to choose between my health and my career. Because of the Leave Bank I was able to take nine weeks off of work in order to focus on my new baby and focus on cancer recovery without worrying about the financial stress of being out of work. Everyone I worked with concerning the Leave Bank was friendly, generous with their time, and wonderful at explaining my options. I am

so thankful to work for an organization that is creative enough to come up with an internal solution to the emergency situations so many of us face as new federal employees.

- 12) I am so grateful to the NIH Leave Bank Program, which helped me as a new federal employee take paid leave to recover after delivery. The Leave Bank coordinators were very helpful from start to finish and made the process easy. I continue to donate to the NIH Leave Bank Program to pay this kindness forward to others in need.
- 13) Life was good, I felt great, and was planning my Spring wedding. As part of a life insurance application, I submitted some lab work that came back with a questionable result. As I'd just had a physical and felt fine, I wasn't worried, and thought the result might just be an error. However, another lab test returned the same results and I was referred to a specialist at Duke University. After extensive testing, I was found to have an extremely rare blood cancer.

At the time, I had good balances in both my sick and annual leave, so I wasn't concerned about using my leave for doctor's appointments. But, as treatments became more complicated and frequent, my leave dwindled. I applied to both VLTP and the Leave Bank for help. Thanks to the generosity of my fellow employees and the Leave Bank, I was able to undergo a complicated stem cell transplant, hospitalization, and very lengthy confinement without loss of pay. It was wonderful to be able to focus on my healing and not have to worry about the mortgage and utilities being paid or having food in the house.

Although I've returned to work part-time, I'm not out of the woods yet, and am still using my Leave Bank leave to cover my time away from work for follow up with my doctors and additional lab work. I strongly suggest that all employees participate in the Leave Bank. Your buy-in is low and the return is incredible. No one can predict when emergencies and illnesses may strike. The Leave Bank is great insurance to protect your income and give you peace of mind when you need it most.

- 14) I was hired into my current position five months pregnant from a private sector position where I accumulated quite a bit of leave to use for maternity leave. In thinking about taking the position at NIH, my now supervisor let me know that the Leave Bank would be able to help me make the transition. I accepted my job, in part, due to the generous conditions of the Leave Bank that allowed me to rest [after delivery]. I am just grateful that the Leave Bank was created to fill that gap and give parents much needed time with their children.
- 15) Joining the Leave Bank was one of the best decisions I have made. I have worked in many other federal agencies and this was the first time I had the opportunity to join a central Leave Bank to cover time should me or a family member get ill requiring me to take more leave than I had available. The only other options that were available to me at other agencies were to rely on donated leave, which I would have to solicit should I run out of leave. The other option was to take leave without pay which would have ruined me financially.

I am so thankful that the Leave Bank not only covers emergencies for me but also for family members. My son underwent a lifesaving liver transplant. I was only expecting to be out two weeks, which I did have leave for. However, he ended up having major complications which required a second transplant and additional time in the hospital and home care once released. Being a member of the Leave Bank saved my family financially – although I had to exhaust my leave, I didn't have to worry about my income as I knew the Leave Bank would be there for me to draw from. During this type of emergency, the last thing you want to worry about is how you are going to pay the bills should you run out of leave. Knowing I was a Leave Bank member allowed me to focus on my family and the care of my son. Because of this situation, I recommend becoming a member of the leave bank to all my colleagues. Thank you for this wonderful benefit.

16) I have been a civilian federal employee for 18 years. Over the course of my career, I accumulated hundreds of annual, sick and time off award hours. My husband, also a civilian federal employee, was diagnosed with a rare and extremely aggressive form of cancer. By the time he was diagnosed, treatment was not an option and was given only months to live. Shortly after his death, I required a major surgery that resulted in 8 weeks of recovery time. I completely wiped out all of my leave that had taken me years to save. Upon returning to work I slowly began to accrue more leave but given my experience was concerned that something could happen that would require extensive leave again. I learned about the Leave Bank program and decided to join.

I suffered a fracture of my leg that required me to bear no weight on my leg for 8 weeks. I was once again faced with wiping out all my leave but this time I had the assurance of continuation of pay thanks to the Leave Bank. I truly believe that having the guarantee of no interruption in my pay reduced my stress levels to the point of a speedy and full recovery without a surgical repair of the bone. Without that support, I'm sure I would have continued to do damage by walking on my injured leg that would have resulted in surgical situation and a much longer recovery. The Leave Bank allowed me to stay home and off my leg, which allowed my body the necessary time to heal. Because I had the Leave Bank's assistance, I was able to reduce my recover time and was back to work in 5 weeks instead of 8! I am truly grateful to this program and would highly recommend it to other employees. Many thanks to the people involved in the processing of my application, the timekeepers at NIEHS, and to all the other people involved in this wonderful program. My experience was terrific!

17) I've been with NIH for 29 years. The last seven years have been a struggle after being diagnosed with a chronic condition that required 8 surgeries in the last seven years. I used up all my sick and annual leave and was advanced leave by my supervisor but this last go around even advanced leave wouldn't cover my absence. I also plan on retiring in June of next year and would have had that leave deducted from my last pay periods pay checks. Thanks to the leave bank, I now will be able to retire with no leave owed.

The application and approval process--turnaround, communication and Yasmin Balci was fast and easy and really did ease my worries for continuing to be in pay status. With my supervisor's and EO's support I was able to be out and not worry about paying my mortgage and loans! I

really appreciate that NIH implemented the leave bank program and after seeing the summary of the first year of usage helped me through a very difficult time. Thank you so much!

- 18) I have been an NIH Leave Bank donor since 2014. When I joined I had no idea I would need to use it myself. I decided to join because I have close family members with health conditions. At any rate, I had a medical emergency myself.
 - I think the NIH Leave Bank is an important program to assist NIH employees during medical emergencies. It encourages employees to heal at a slower pace without financial worries. Also, it provides enough time to assist their family members facing medical emergencies.
 - In conclusion, I have been back at NLM since the middle of May. I feel fine and I'm able to perform all the duties required by my Federal Government position. I'm glad I became a Leave Bank donor.
- 19) I went for my yearly mammogram and received a call that they wanted me to come back for another mammogram. I remember being upset thinking they didn't get a good read with the first and now I am having to take time away from work to go for another mammogram. I went for my second mammogram and was asked to wait in the room this time. I knew when the radiologist walked through the door that I wasn't going to be leaving the office as carefree as when I arrived. He recommended I have a stereotactic biopsy which I did and two days before my 45th birthday I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Almost immediately the appointments started, the amount of various medical appointments was unbelievable. Two years out, hundreds of doctors, treatments, and therapy appointments later (that is not an exaggeration) I still am not done.

I am scheduled for another reconstructive surgery, hoping this will be the last, and I have follow-up appointments with all my specialists at various times throughout the year for the next several years. Being diagnosed with cancer has taken me on a very long journey. The journey is difficult but it could have been so much more difficult if I had to worry about being away from work without pay. Even with good medical insurance there was a lot of money coming out of our household income going for medical expenses that weren't covered completely by insurance. If I still wasn't receiving my salary during that time life would have been so much more stressful than what it already was. I know that additional stress would have had a negative impact on my health and well-being. I cannot tell you how many times I have thanked God for that email, phone call and the ability to enroll in the Leave Bank Program. The peace of mind, comfort and security the program has offered during such an insecure time is immeasurable. Thank you!

20) I am a huge supporter of the Leave Bank. When I used the Leave Bank, I had only been in my position for about a year and half resulting in very little accrued leave. I was going to be out for 12 weeks for maternity leave and the leave bank provided me with paid leave for 6 of the 12 weeks. It was a very nice option to have considering there is no such thing as paid maternity

leave in the government. I am very grateful to the Leave Bank for allowing me to have that time home with my baby.

- 21) So far, the Leave Bank leave hours have really saved me and allowed me to undergo my cancer treatment without having to worry about losing my job! It indeed has been a life saver for me and my family!
- 22) I want to share my heart felt appreciation to the Leave Bank team. During my absence to care for my beloved husband last year, I was compelled to recognize the superb care from the team. I reached out to the several members several times frequently to seek assistance and guidance in the midst of my family crisis. All members I interacted with were always professional, competent and above all compassionate.

The level of technical knowledge of the Regulations and Policies applicability and hierarchy were critical to lessen the financial hardship on my family. In addition to their genuine compassion to my situation. As a Federal employee first time recipient of these benefits, I am convinced that the Leave Bank program met its mission as designed to help a Federal employee in my situation.

Thanks again for having competent, skillful, and compassionate employees onboard. For me to receive this level of service, it speaks of your leadership and working values. It is easy to remember the people we meet in the good days but the people we meet in hard times are jewels we treasure the rest of our life—this my own quote I made for you as you were among the Angels placed in my life to help.

- 23) I did not think that I would ever need to have a leave of any type, except for vacation and occasional sick day. I had been having problems with my knees for several years and had put off having surgery. I finally decided to have surgery on my "worst" knee. I was able to take off for 2 months, using my vacation, sick leave and some additional time with the Leave Bank hours. I could put my mind on my rehab and healing, instead of trying to return to work before I was able to. Thank you, to all who have put in their hours of leave, so that people like me, are able to concentrate on things which are needed to be done outside of work.
- 24) I am very grateful that the NIH has the Leave Bank program. My son needed a limb lengthening surgery to correct a problem with his femur bone. He would need 6-8 weeks of intensive physical therapy 3-4 days a week at the onsite rehab center. The challenge of having to transport my son to Baltimore from Montgomery County would have been a tremendous strain on our family if not for the Leave Bank program. With the help of the Leave Bank I was able to care for my son and take him to the therapy sessions without accruing any leave without pay. My son made a full recovery and I felt less stressed! Thank you to Leave Bank!!
- 25) Words cannot express my gratitude for the Leave Bank. I have been a member since the beginning and have applied for leave as a recipient on several occasions. My son has a very

serious (and terminal) illness, resulting in many hospital stays, as well as multiple surgeries. Knowing that the Leave Bank is available gives me the peace of mind to know that remaining in pay status is something that I no longer have to worry about and that I can put all my attention and care where it should be, with my son. Knowing that I no longer have to make the choice of being at work or with my son when he needs me most, is a blessing to be cherished. From our family to yours, thank you for helping us through this very difficult time.

- 26) The Leave Bank has made a huge difference in my life as I have a daughter in college and an adult son with a disabling condition. Thanks!
- 27) When I came to my new institute four years ago, I joined the Leave Bank thinking "just in case" and when my health started to go in the wrong direction and as the doctors tried to narrow down my aliments, thank goodness I invested in the Leave Bank as I was off over six times in the last three years. The Leave Bank has truly helped me and my family for days that I would have had to take LWOP. With the proper doctor's notes and diagnosis, I was paid each and every time for complications from migraines where I was off for six weeks for testing, to having major dental surgeries where I had to have four days off work. I had the flu and was out for two weeks and the Leave bank covered that for me and I am now in the upward mode for my health issues.

They are getting better and I am able to be more productive at work and continue in my career. Had I been in a private sector I would have been let go but thanks to the leave bank I am still employed, and my bills are being paid and my family and I are not suffering. All I had to do was donate 8 hours each year and they have given me more hours of pay than I have donated. I truly and highly recommend that other employees take advantage of Leave Bank as you never know when and if you will need it.

- 28) I had to have surgery and I had to be off work for 5 weeks. I was short of leave and applied for leave through the Leave Bank. I was awarded enough leave to cover my absence from work. The Leave Bank is a wonderful benefit you only have to donate 8 hours and sign-up. It is like an insurance policy that doesn't cost much. The staff was wonderful to work with; they help you through the paperwork if you ever need to request leave. As you can tell, I highly recommend that you sign-up.
- 29) I would like to share my leave bank story with everyone. I was excited the Leave Bank was going to be available to everyone soon, I couldn't wait to sign up. All I had to do was give up six hours of my vacation time in case I would need to use time from the Leave Bank at a later time. This was a win win situation. I didn't know that I would be using the Leave Bank sooner than later.

Prior to the leave bank being available, I went to the hospital to have outpatient surgery. I had a lot of sick time & AL in case I needed to be off longer than one week, which is what my surgeon said the recovery time would be. However, I did not know at the time what a nightmare my surgery was going to be and my recovery was going to take months instead of a week. Needless

to say, I had several complications that kept me in the hospital longer than planned. During my recovery from my first surgery I had to have emergency surgery a week later and all of my sick time, vacation time wasn't enough time so I had to borrow time. My recovery took over three months plus when I came back to work, I had to call in several times because of surgical complications, which ate up any new time earned. I knew after the second surgery that I would need a third surgery in six months.

I was lucky Leave Bank was now available. Recovery for the third surgery was going to be another three months. I didn't have any time saved to cover another long recovery period. I was stressed about having another surgery, stressed about paying bills, and stressed about the recovery time. Giving up six hours of vacation time when I joined the Leave Bank for 480 hours which was used for my recovery helped take a lot of stress off me and my husband. I didn't need to stress out about borrowing more time which would need to be paid back.

If someone asks me if I think they should sign up for the Leave Bank, the answer is a resounding YES. I tell them how it helped me. So if you get a chance to sign up, you need to do it. Giving up some vacation hours is worth the peace of mind you will receive.

- 30) The Leave Bank benefit enabled me to care for myself while healing from an injury that rendered me unable to perform my nursing role. Without the Leave Bank benefit, I would have been unable to pay my bills without working in another capacity. Working in another capacity while caring for myself after the injury would have been extremely stressful, impeding my healing process. I am very grateful for this program that permitted me to follow the doctor's orders and take care of myself through a full recovery. I am back to work in my full capacity and recommend this program to everyone. You never know when an accident may cause you to be unable to work.
- 31) I had been sick for a while without realizing it. I presented with extreme fatigue, shortness of breath, and I just couldn't think straight. My primary care doctor was stumped because I did not fit any particular profile for a specific disease (particularly my age). Finally, as a last resort, he said, "Get an echocardiogram." What?, I thought, it can't be my heart. I exercise regularly and (mostly) eat right. The echo showed a very enlarged heart (heart failure) requiring immediate attention.

Life stopped after that diagnosis. I had to drop everything, and I mean EVERYTHING! No working, no taking care of the family, nothing. What?, I thought again, I can't stop working, how will I pay bills? Along came the phenomenal HR staff at the Institute where I was employed during my illness. She helped me develop a plan so that I could use sick leave, annual leave, voluntary leave, and the Leave Bank (I signed up for it before even getting sick) while on extended medical leave. The Leave Bank made an invaluable contribution to my recovery. Instead of fretting over my job and how to cover expenses, I could focus on my recovery. I am happy to report that I am back at work, and doing much better. I will continue to contribute to the Leave Bank every year to show my appreciation for how it positively impacted my life, and by extension, my family's lives.

- 32) In October, I had my first child. This was an awesome experience for me, I had done everything right and used my annual and sick leave for 3 months of maternity leave. While on maternity leave in November, I received a text message from a co-worker that said "Don't forget to sign up for the leave bank." As an Administrative Officer, I know the importance of signing up for the leave bank. I have heard stories firsthand about and how the leave bank has helped so many others in the past, so I signed up for the Leave bank.
 - Fast forward seven months later, I was diagnosed with Stage 0 breast cancer, also known as DCIS. My doctor advised me that the best treatment plan for my total health would be to have a double mastectomy with a recommended recovery time of at least 6 to 8 weeks. If I had not signed up for the leave bank I don't know what I would have done. I had used all of my prior earned leave on maternity leave. The leave bank afforded me the capability to physically and mentally recover without stress or anxiety in reference to getting paid or losing my job. If I can provide any advice to my fellow co-workers or federal employees it would be to join the leave bank, your donation can either help someone else or yourself.
- 33) Soon after starting work at NIH, my personal life got very complicated. My father's health quickly deteriorated and I twice applied to use the Leave Bank in my first year of employment so I could be his caregiver. It was a huge weight off my shoulders to know that my income was protected, while I focused on being there for my father when he needed me most. My father died 10 months after I started working at NIH, and because of the Leave Bank, I was able to take care of him around the clock while he was in hospice care at my home. I am so grateful to have had that time with my dad, without the stress of wondering how I would make ends meet.
 - Additionally, as is often the case with caregivers who tend to neglect their own health, I learned that I had my own serious health issue not long after my dad died. I will have surgery later this month, just four months after my dad died—and of course, I do not have enough earned sick or annual leave to cover the four weeks off that is needed for my recovery. As such, I turned to the Leave Bank for the third time, and I was again approved. I won't have to rush back to work after surgery because I'm worried about my paycheck. Instead, I will return to work when I'm healthy, in the time period my doctor recommends. And I am grateful that my employer cares so much about employees' well-being and work-life balance that such a program is in place.
- 34) I think this is a great program. I was able to utilize the leave bank when I had to have surgery on my rotator cup and needed 4 to 6 weeks to recover. I did not have enough sick or annual leave; had it not been for the leave bank, I would not have had the recovery time that I needed to heal.
- 35) I've spent the past ten years making frequent trips to Florida to oversee care for my elderly mother, so my own earned leave balances are relatively low. Fortunately, I never had to apply to use Leave Bank hours ... but I'm really glad that my contributions could help others, and that my participation saved me from worrying about potentially coping with leave-without-pay if I encountered a medical situation of my own. So thanks very much for all the work that you and your colleagues at the Leave Bank do! Know that it's appreciated.

The Leave Bank is analogous to car insurance. We buy it every single year, and even though we're paying money, we really hope we don't have to use it and are relieved at the end of the year if we didn't have to use it. Meanwhile, who would want to risk being liable for damages for one's own car, others' cars, and most importantly injury to self or others in a car accident?

The Leave Bank donation is even better ... It's much less "expensive". And if an employee does have to draw on the Leave Bank, it has a much bigger benefit – potentially saving weeks or months of salary during a time that would already be stressful; as well as keeping an employee away from extended leave-without-pay and potential disability retirement status. – Leave Bank Member

- 36) I am so thankful that the Leave Bank was available to me as a NIH employee. I needed foot surgery, with a lengthy recuperation period of time necessary. Without the leave bank, I would not have been able to have the surgery. The Leave Bank is another fine example of a benefit available to all NIH employees. It has proven to be invaluable in the recruitment and retention of NIH employees. It shows that employees are important and highly valued at the NIH.
- 37) I want to tell everyone how grateful I am for the support of the Leave Bank. I had a total knee replacement. That meant 8 weeks off from work. I was so worried how would I cover that time as I knew combined I would run out of leave. Being a member of the Leave Bank is one of the smartest things I have ever done. I only had to worry about taking care of myself thanks to wonderful Leave Bank staff. They sent me emails assuring me everything was running smoothly and worked with my timekeeper to make sure I had a paycheck every two weeks. Thank you all again for this incredible program.
- 38) My mother was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of cancer a few months after I started working at NIH. The Leave Bank allowed me to be able to continue to work, but still assist her until her last breath. Without the Leave Bank, I would not have been able to be there for the person who had always been there for me.
 - I am so grateful for the generosity and compassion of my NIH colleagues who contributed and donated their leave so I could provide care for my loved one. This is an excellent benefit and program for all of us and I encourage everyone to participate!
- 39) I cannot adequately express how appreciative I am for being able to participate in the leave bank program. Because of the leave bank, I was able to go to North Carolina almost every other week, during my daughter's chemotherapy treatments for Hodgkin's Lymphoma and ensure she took her post chemo medications, remained hydrated, observe if she developed an infection due to her low blood counts and had a place to recuperate.
 - My ability to travel so often due to the leave bank also allowed her to remain in school, which kept her spirits up. She is a wildlife biology major with a minor in rehabilitation. The college has

their own certified Wildlife rehabilitation center and taking care of the animals has been good therapy for her.

- 40) I desperately needed time off to do dialysis 3 times a week in the afternoons while I waited for 3 years for an organ to be available. Then I had the transplant surgery, and still needed time for the recovery. I was very scared and worried how I could take so much time off without taking leave with no pay. While asking around I found out about the Leave Bank. This was a life saver. Folks at the LB were compassionate and efficient. After I filed my application, all the leave I needed (based on the physician's request), was arranged very quickly per year. I am very grateful that NIH has this program and hope more and more people will donate leave to the LB so that all can have one less thing to worry about during prolonged illnesses.
- 41) My mother has stroke in early 2017 and I went to Ghana to provide for her, I utilized all my sick and annual leave. I applied for leave bank and the process was very smoothly even with the communications from Ghana. Thank you.
- 42) I have been a federal employee for nearly a decade, but recently joined the NIH community as well as the Leave Bank (LB) Program. The other federal departments that I worked for, in previous years, did not offer any additional pay options during extended leave, unless the employee requested advanced leave. When I was informed about the NIH Leave Bank Program, I thought that it was an absolutely amazing concept and more than worth the small annual donation required. It is truly a blessing to know that in times of need, the LB will ensure that you continue to receive your paycheck without being indebted for a lengthy period of time, as can occur with advanced leave. At any time, a person can be faced with an unexpected medical emergency. So, I am very thankful that this option was available for me during maternity leave and would encourage everyone to enroll!
- 43) I recently converted to a federal employee and then I realized that I would have to go in for a knee replacement. Since I did not have enough vacation and accrued sick leave, I was asked to apply to the leave bank. They were very helpful and walked me through the paperwork which was quite straight forward.
 - I was granted leave and I cannot tell you how much I appreciate the given time to recover without having to worry about timesheets and work. I thought I would recover very quickly but it took me some time and I am glad that the leave bank was able to give me that much time off.
 - I am truly grateful to the leave bank for extending the compassion and flexibility during the time of my surgery.
- 44) Thank you for the opportunity to share my Leave Bank story. I contributed to the Leave Bank program as soon as I heard about it. I couldn't imagine having to worry about losing income while dealing with a medical emergency...that is, until it was my turn. Four years ago, I was

diagnosed with severe heart failure. I went from working and living my life to immediately putting everything on hold—work included. The cardiologist warned that I might never work again, if I were lucky enough to even get better. It was a devastating blow for me—I was in my early 40s', much too young to have heart failure, right? Wrong! And even if I did get better, what would my quality of life be?

In this backdrop of disorientation and confusion, I had to figure out what to do about my job. I was too stubborn to accept that I could never work again, and with the help of an extraordinary human resources team at the IC where I worked at that time, they helped me with my request for leave from the Leave Bank. It eliminated a major worry, leaving me able to focus on recovery. Today, I'm happy to report that I am back to working full-time. My heart function will never be 'cured', but I've no doubt that my remarkable recovery was due to those who contributed to the Leave Bank. I continue to donate every year, and will continue to do so until my last work day, which I hope will be many, many years from now.