

COLORADO FAMILIES NEED PAID FAMILY LEAVE

Right now only 17% of working people in the United States have access to paid family leave through their employer. [1] And although the current Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) allows some employees to take up to 12 weeks of job-protected unpaid leave, it only covers about 60 percent of employees. Further, many people who are eligible to take FMLA can't afford to take it, because FMLA's unpaid. This lack of paid, job-protected leave is why 1 in 4 new mothers is back at work within 10 days of having a baby [2] and also why 1 in 5 retirees leaves the workforce earlier than planned because they need time away from work to care for a spouse or loved one. [3]

Working families need and deserve a robust detail-driven paid family and medical leave policy. We need a plan that is accessible to all working people, inclusive when it comes defining family, affordable and cost-effective and sustainable for workers, employers, and taxpayers and provides a meaningful length of leave. ***Please read the following stories from Colorado and take them to heart. Our families are counting on you.**

Carol, Centennial

Fifteen years ago I was able to go stay with my sister when she was terminally ill. It was a great comfort to both of us to be together. Six years ago we lost our youngest son to suicide. We were devastated. It was over 2 months before I felt I could cope with work again. For both of these tragedies I was able to use the large amount of sick time I had accrued over the years. We wouldn't have been able to manage without it. I was able to take time to grieve without worrying about finances. Sadly these benefits at my job have been taken away. We no longer accrue sick leave- we have short/ long term disability - other-

wise they use your vacation time. It is only used if you are ill. If you take time off to care for a loved one or are grieving a loss you do not get paid. The quality of life for working people keeps unraveling.

Leanne, New Castle

When my son was born, we faced a really hard time. While my husband and I both worked, we are in our mid 20s and still getting a good start in the world. We need both incomes to survive, especially in early 2009, right after the economy crashed. My son was 3 weeks old, and my husband was laid off, and my mother was battling fatal cancer.

Not having an income during this trifecta of events was so critical to our family, and we are still fighting to recover from the damage that was done. Had we had even 6 weeks of paid leave I could have been less stressed about our family, and able to enjoy the limited time I had left with my mother before she died, and enjoyed the time with my infant son. I would have been able to afford to feed myself and my family, to nurse my son, and to try to get off to a good start like every baby deserves.

Andrea, Aurora

I am terminally ill, and my husband cannot take time off to take care of me or to take me to appointments. I cannot drive, and I have had to cancel critical appointments for this reason. How many lives can be saved just by paying people when they need to take care of a critically or terminally ill family member??



**Working families in the United States
LOSE AT LEAST \$20.6 BILLION
IN WAGES EVERY YEAR
due to a lack of access to
paid family and medical leave**

Source: Sarah Jane Glynn and Danielle Corley, "The Cost of Work-Family Policy Inaction: Quantifying the Costs Families Currently Face as a Result of Lacking U.S. Work-Family Policies" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2016), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2016/09/22/143877/the-cost-of-inaction/>.)

Join the conversation on Twitter: @MomsRising would love to hear your hopes and plan for #Paid-FamilyLeave. For more stories from your state visit www.MomsRising.org

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[1] <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/workplace/paid-leave.html> [2] *In These Times: The Real War on Families*
[3] *Keeping Up with the Times: Supporting Family Caregivers with Workplace Leave Policies*, AARP Public Policy Institute

Tracy, Boulder

I work at a major state university as a non-tenure track faculty member. My university only offers paid maternity leave to tenure-track and tenured professors (the vast minority of female employees). The rest of us have to use our disability leave if we want to have any paid time off after a baby is born/adopted. When my daughter was born, I used up all of my disability leave and was simply fortunate not to get sick enough in the ensuing two years to need it. This obviously puts women employees at a disadvantage, since men are able to save their disability leave for surgeries, illnesses, etc. And, after all, childbirth is not a disability! To add insult to injury, the employee handbook actually states that employees should try to plan childbirth for the summer months so as not to interrupt student learning. Someone is clearly out of touch!

Janet, Littleton

I was hit and injured by a drunk driver. My wife is a school bus driver that had to take unpaid FMLA. Not only to take care of me, but to take care of our three children and get them back and forth to school etc. Why should our family face hardship because of something that happened to us and affects our entire family that wasn't our fault.

Margarita, Denver

My partner and I are in the process of adopting a child. As the main bread winner, I fear that I will not have the opportunity to bond with my child because Colorado does not offer paid family leave. My partner has a serious medical condition that doesn't allow her to lift more than 10 lbs. I wish I could stay home to help her out while we get into the routine of having a son/daughter in our house, but unless paid family leave was offered here. I am just going to have to deal with going to work because we cannot afford to not have my paycheck for 12 weeks.

Joy, Ft. Collins

When I adopted my daughter and brought her home, I was an independent consultant. I had worked hard at my former employer, a university, to provide leave for adoptive families. Eventually that policy went through, which I feel good about. However, because I did not have paid leave, I incurred more debt and eventually had to declare bankruptcy. It wasn't the only factor but it was a significant one. I had planned financially for it but the adoption itself took up those savings -- my adoption was held up for most of a year once I was in country. Looking at my daughter and how well she adapted, I am glad of the decision I made to work less when we first got home. It was a very tough year last year but things are getting better now. Now I work 4/5 time for a company with a very good sick and personal leave policy.

Jorddan, Rollinsville

After the birth of my third child, my husband held a job barely over minimum wage and I had a job as a clerk typist. My wages were greater than my husband's. I utilized my accumulated

vacation to stay at home for ten days. After that time ran out, I had to return to work or we wouldn't have been able to pay the basic necessities of utilities, water, rent, food, gas, etc. At that time we did not have credit cards and were unable to obtain a loan. I went crazy trying to continue to breastfeed my child and finally had to go to bottle feeding. I was exhausted when I came home and often worked until midnight keeping up with the household chores and other children. Ultimately, it took its toll on my health--incurring heart palpitations and high blood pressure that doctors had trouble controlling with medication. After daycare expenses, I netted \$372.00 just enough to pay the electric, gas and phone. Tragic to incur such a cost to myself and family working forty hours just to clear enough to pay the utilities.

Jessica, Colorado Springs

I am still "paying back" advanced sick leave I took when my son was born. He is now 10 months old.

Joan, Boulder

I had no paid leave when my son was born, but fortunately I could take some time off of work. But the three months really were only two and a half and the stress when I went back to work was unbearable. I was fortunate to be able to work some from home, but I was exhausted and after a few months of sleep deprivation, I asked to go part time. Of course they agreed, but the work load didn't change. I put in 200 hours of overtime in a six week period on top of working 40 hour weeks, not the 20 we had agreed on. After three years I resigned to raise my son. Even though I have worked freelance for the past 15 years, I am now unemployable because I haven't "worked" on staff for so many years. Children are what keeps our society going, yet I am not sure that I would advise young couples to have any. I love my child and do not regret having had one, but families pay a really big price.

Maureen, LaFayette

Our child was unexpected, but an absolute delight! Unfortunately, we've had to make a lot of sacrifices in order to make ends meet. We couldn't afford daycare, so my husband has chosen to stay home and take care of him, making me the sole income in our home. I had less than a week of sick and vacation time built up, leaving us little income to live on while I was out of work. Because we were only living on my income, I had to go back to work within a month of him being born, even though I had an emergency c-section and was still recovering from the surgery. We've had to switch to partial formula, because even though I pump at work, I just don't make enough to feed him like I do when he's only breastfeeding. Formula is expensive! I make enough that we can pay our bills, and eat meagerly, but if any emergency would come up, we would be in trouble. If we would have had paid leave, we could pay our bills, and ensure that if something were to happen, we would still have our savings to cover it. Not only that, but I wouldn't have missed his first smile, first giggle, and other important milestones that I have been waiting my whole life to witness.