

ILLINOIS 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 Illinois and take them to heart. Our families are counting on you.**

Jane, Vienna

At my prior job, days off were granted for hospitalization of parents, grandparents, spouses and children, but not for siblings. When I spent several days at an out of state hospital while my sister was dying from complications of cancer treatment, I was not paid for the time off and of course had to work scads of OT to catch up. My sister didn't have children or much of a support system, so it was extremely important for me to be there, and I feel I was penalized for doing so.

Catherine, Germantown Hills

The man with whom I live has cancer. He works as a salesman. He has no health care. He is only paid for the time he works. He has no family leave or anything else.

Nancy, Chicago

As a single mother of a daughter who has had multiple and chronic health issues and as a daughter to an aging mother who also has multiple serious health conditions, I have had to take time off to care take either and/or both.

Paid family leave has been very important to me in order for me to be able to take care of my family and not accrue more financial stress.

Rachel, DeKalb

I flew out to California from Illinois to be with my daughter for the birth of my first grandchild. I had booked to be in California or 2 week. My Grandbaby was 10 days late in coming . My daughter had an approximately 30 hour labor. It ended in C-section and she was exhausted. I changed my plane ticket home to add one more week. My daughter spent 4 days in the hospital after delivery.

FMLA is limited in that you get paid or unpaid leave up to 12 weeks. Families should have at minimum paid leave up to 12 weeks guaranteed AND optional paid or unpaid leave through 24 weeks.



**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

Andrea, Champaign

As a working and nursing mom I struggled with the current FMLA law. I took the full 12 weeks with my first son as he was struggling to learn how to nurse and my family struggled financially because of it. Then we struggled with my son being a infant in daycare with myself having no sick days left to care for him. With my second it was too much juggling and I decided to give up working because I my life was already difficult to balance. Paid time off is the right thing to do to support families all over and not make them have to choose between earning a living and the well being if their children.

Maya, Chicago

I had my first child one year ago and was offered 6 weeks of unpaid leave. This appallingly low number was offered as a courtesy by my employer who, having fewer than 50 employees, wasn't bound by FMLA laws. I worked until I was 39 and a half weeks pregnant but because I chose to have my baby naturally, she wasn't born until over two weeks after her due date. This meant she was only 3 and a half weeks old by the time I was meant to go back to work. This is a demeaning and terrible position to put a women who is still recovering from the physical act of childbirth. And to top it all off, they laid me off. No one should have to worry so much at such an important and pivotal moment in their lives when there is so much at stake.

Nancy, Hickory Hills

I had to return home for an upcoming surgery for myself. Although I felt bad leaving, I was so relieved her husband had paid family leave and could be home with her. It has also helped me after my surgery that my husband was able to be home with me without loss income.

Marion, Chicago

I am an advocate for paid leave, it was very important to me at one point in my life where I had a surgical procedure and was off work for 8 weeks .I thank God I get paid while on leave. However if that wasn't the case I would have been in financial devastation trying to pay my monthly obligation including keeping a roof over mine and my children's head. Paid leave is.very important.

Felicia, Antioch

After taking 12 weeks (six of which were unpaid) to care for my prematurely born newborn, my FMLA is exhausted. Now that he's sick, I don't have any time to take to care for him. We're relying on my husbands leave to care for him, which is also unpaid. And, as is typical, he makes more money than I do so we will struggle to pay our bills while he takes unpaid leave. It is NOT FAIR. It should be FULL PAID LEAVE FOR EVERYONE!

Colleen, Chicago

As a new mom, I am so thankful that my employer provided me with enough benefits to take 3 months of paid leave. I cannot imagine the sadness and difficulty other moms face when

having to choose between caring for their baby or earning a living.

Amie, Nashville

As a pregnant mom, paid family leave would be great for my husband.

Alexis, Chicago

Don't make people sacrifice caring for their family members because they can't afford to take unpaid time off. It's not a choice anyone should have to make, especially new parents. Having paid time off for the birth of my children made me a better worker: I was rested and motivated when I went back instead of tired and resentful about being taken away from my babies too soon (not to mention before I was fully healed from the births). Paid leave is important for everyone.

Emila, Homewood

I am a full-time professional librarian and teacher with two advanced degrees. I am also a mother, wife and daughter who wants the best for her family and herself, and strives to be a good role model and citizen. Becoming educated and contributing to society are important to me, but my family should not have to pay some kind of penalty for my ambition and desire to be learned and successful. Kindly recognize the sacrifices we women make every day for our country and our families even when we feel as though we are forced to choose between becoming educated and career-oriented vs. being family-focused. Understand that there does not need to be a dichotomy between the two--and that everyone in our society would benefit from paid family leave programs that help families.

Sarah, Elgin

I am an educated professional woman who is the head of my household. My income is what supports our family. I was only able to receive 60% of my pay for 6 weeks of my leave in Oct 2013 and my family is still catching up from that loss of income. We ended up having to take on expensive credit card debt to cover things like groceries and diapers. If my husbands income was primary we wouldn't have suffered financially at all.

Emily, River Forest

I recently had twins, which required an emergency c-section and nearly two weeks in the NICU. Because my company did not offer paid maternity leave, I had to take unpaid time off to let my body heal and recover from surgery, and to allow me to spend time with my baby during his time at the hospital. Twins (especially unexpected ones!) are extraordinarily expensive, so the unpaid time with my babies was quite a financial strain. Fortunately, my husband and I have a strong family network and were in good shape financially, so we were okay. Unfortunately, we were unusual. For most people, this would have caused incredible economic hardship. This is unacceptable in this country!