

MASSACHUSETTS 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 Massachusetts and take them to heart. Our families are counting on you.**

Gwen, Framingham

When my elderly uncle was having surgery for an aortic aneurysm 1,500 miles away I took a week off from teaching to be with him. I was his only living relative. My mother, his sister, died of complications from a ruptured aneurysm - the same size and the exact location as his. When I returned I was told I would not be paid for the time off. I said that I always treated my students with honesty and compassion, yet I was not going to be treated the same way by the administration. How could I have been as effective in the classroom knowing he was alone in the hospital having major surgery with no relative there?

Luckily the contract was being negotiated at that same time and a week of family leave with pay was written in the new contract. I was paid for the week I took off. My uncle was so grateful for my presence and I truly believe it helped with his recovery. When I returned to the classroom I was able to focus on my students.

Lois, Charlton City

Just as many working mothers (and fathers) have done; I had to finagle accrued vacation time in order to cope with family emergencies. Those were times difficult for my family and my coworkers as well. Not all managers are able to understand another person's need to cope with family crises. Once in my life; I had to actually walk off a job because of a death in my family.

Rose, New Bedford

Unfortunately my husband has stage 4 Peritoneal Cancer that has spread to his small intestines. He only had 2 to 4 months left to live. I don't want to even think about getting old without my husband and best friend. I need to spend some time with him while I still have him. I can take FMLA to protect my job but I can't afford to stay home without a paycheck. I need to keep working to be able to pay for our rent, food and most importantly health insurance for my husband. Working is a horrible choice to have to make in these circumstances but we can't live without my paycheck.



**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

Rachel, Wellesley

As owner of a small business, I have had the occasion to see three women pregnant during the same year. While there have been many employees who have taken paid time off, saving vacation, personal and sick time to use after they gave birth/- became parents, I had not considered how hard it is for a company to deal with payment for benefit hours if several employees need it all in a short period of time. Scheduling, of course, is a challenge, but the bigger challenge is the outflow of funds for their paid time off while also paying for those who take their place.

In order to smooth all this out, AND give more time – 12-16 weeks seems appropriate for a postpartum stretch – a business would benefit from payments made to a parental time much like their unemployment account. Every employer pays in, as every employer should fund a 3-6 month parental leave for their employees, especially mothers. This is just good planning for business.

Katie, Westford

I am fortunate enough to work for a company that offers twelve weeks of paid maternity leave. I was able to recover from the birth and bond with my baby without having to worry about getting back to work to pay the bills. During my maternity leave my husband needed emergency surgery and was not able to work anymore. He didn't qualify for any assistance. Without this paid leave, I would have had to return to work early, with no child care and with no one to take care of my recovering husband. I am now the sole provider for my family and I am so thankful everyday that I had this time to spend with my newborn and my husband without going into debt or digging into savings. We as a country, and as people living in Massachusetts need to approve paid time off for mothers and fathers. Most people cannot take 12 weeks unpaid without having financial consequences and this needs to change. Everyone deserves time to bond with their babies without worrying about money.

Amanda, Wareham

I was an independent contractor for 11 years with a newspaper delivery company. It was a good job for that time: only work nights, good tips, etc but it was 365 days a year with no sick time at all-never mind paid. If you're sick you either go anyway or pay someone to cover you and hope they don't mess it up too much. This becomes an issue if you're having a baby. During my 'paper years', I gave birth to two children and was only able to get 5 days of coverage and 3 days of coverage. That's what I could find available (and that was a struggle) so that's what I got. Taking only a few days off of work after a baby is difficult. You're sore, you're tired, you don't want to lift anything. It wasn't all bad, this was the kind of job you can take kids with you if need be, and need was. So it did help with a good nursing relationship, though being home probably would have been better, but pulling over on the side of the road was what was available. I understand that independent contractors don't get the same rights as employees so I think they're frequently left out of benefitting from any kinds of rights and it shouldn't be that way. Having a leave in general would have been nice,

nevermind a paid one. Probably couldn't have afforded to take an unpaid leave but the option would have been nice. I've watched, and had done myself, people go in to work VERY sick. Serious medical problems with medical advice not to but what choice is there?

Erica, Randolph

My employer does not provide any paid maternity leave, and my husband got 1 whole week of paid paternity leave. So, I drained my bank of sick and vacation time to stay home for 12 weeks. When I returned to work full-time, I had no way to take half-days or days off when my baby got sick or even needed a routine pediatrician visit. And of course, I was breastfeeding because this is best for my baby, and had to find a place to 'hide' at work 3 times a day, lugging that pump everywhere. It is NOT RIGHT that this is a typical experience for a mother in the United States.

Thalia, Acton

With unpaid leave for myself, and unpaid leave for my husband, we managed to keep our son at home for the first 2.5 months. Once he started going to daycare - a good daycare, with caring people - he started getting all kinds of illnesses at such a young age. It was extremely stressful, and a negative medical impact.

Susan, Boston

The ONLY reason I was able to stay home for the first couple of weeks is that my husband was able to take his sick time, with pay, allowing us to be able to spend time with our newborn AND pay the bills. If we support the idea that society will thrive with the birth of new life then we must support those that bring that life forth!

Irena, Stow

I struggled to put together a 'paid' family leave after my son was born. My company was kind enough to offer 2 weeks of paid time off to anyone either having or adopting a new child in Jan of 2010 (my son was born in March of 2010) but this 2 weeks was the same whether you were a man or a woman. Recovery from delivering a baby is a lot different than staying home to help with the baby so the 2 weeks wasn't enough. The company, however, couldn't offer more. I relied on my short term disability insurance which paid out 60% of my salary for six weeks (really 5, after the 7 day black out period) and then relied on my one week vacation time (I didn't have a lot stored up since I used all my PTO to go to the doctor for maternity care). This left me with 5 weeks unpaid that we were only able to take when my mother in law helped us pay our bills so I could stay home longer with the baby. All this while I struggled to establish breastfeeding, with my son being tongue tied and then not knowing how to latch for weeks. We would have never been able to be successful had I not been able to take that entire 12 weeks, and if his daycare wasn't 15 steps away from my office so I could continue breastfeeding exclusively. I certainly don't know what I'll do for baby #2. I feel like he or she will get the short end of the stick since we used all of our resources on our first. I don't have a lot of hope.