

MARYLAND 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 Maryland and take them to heart. Our families are counting on you.**

Carla, Annapolis

A review to make FMLA paid is long overdue. I know many people who cannot take full advantage of FMLA after short term disability runs out due to the fact that they cannot afford to stay out of work.

This results in putting their children's best interests aside (weaning breastfeeding too early, out of home care at 6 weeks, etc) because of financial hardship. These changes in the child's life prematurely can have adverse side effects, of which the most troubling being death.

Amanda, Silver Spring

I was working as a part time contractor for the federal government when I broke my arm. I was fresh out of grad school, looking for a "real" job, and I had no health insurance. I couldn't get to work for over a month while I was healing, and the financial stress of the medical bills, student loans, and regular day-to-day costs certainly did not help me to heal any faster. It was a very hard and dark time for me.

Jennifer, Cockeysville

With limited sick and vacation days, we pray that two separate needs don't happen at once to over strain the resources we have, but the death of a parent and the birth of a child happened in a 2 month span in our family. Paid family leave is the difference between bills being paid and providing for my family versus bills being late, fees, interest, and credit score deductions.

Danielle, Clarksville

FMLA is a wonderful law - but it is not enough. I was working in a professional, office, part-time job when I lost my job after giving birth to an 8-week early premature child who spent one month in the NICU. This law protects jobs when workers need to take time off to take care of themselves - or - a loved one. A person's livelihood shouldn't be in jeopardy because an employer thinks it is inconvenient to have an employee take needed time off. Shame on my employer but its only fired me up to speak out about this issue.



**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

MomsRising.org | MamásConPoder.org

[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

Jenn, Forest Hills

In 2015 I gave birth to my first son, 10 days early. I had planned accordingly and saved every single day off from January-September to save for my unpaid 12 week leave. I also received 60% of 5 weeks of my salary using short term disability. My HR department failed to submit this paperwork so I was unpaid until 9 weeks after my son was delivered. Since my son came early, I had to return to work before Christmas, working the holidays instead of being with my family which is a time I always take off if I have vacation left. Luckily, he was born at the end of the year so I used every vacation/sick/personal day I had.

In 2017 I experienced a miscarriage and continued to work like I wasn't dying inside as this is not something we ever receive time off for. This year, I am finally pregnant again, after over a year of struggle and loss. My baby is due in March and at that time I will have to use ALL of my sick/vacation/personal days. My company gives us our days upfront which is great if you want to go away in January but not if you have a child in March and then return without ANY time. That means no doctors appointments, class trips, vacations, extended holidays, sick days, you name it.

I return to work, a mom of 2 and stress about how I will care for my children if they get sick or need me to pick them up early. That doesn't even include that I am using vacation days for childbirth. What part of childbirth is a vacation? The two don't belong in the same category! The fact that this is my worry, since the moment I calculated the due date, and has added so much stress to my pregnancy is showing how sad the world we live in is. We need more. We need change. Treat your moms with the courtesy they deserve to bring happy lives into this world and nourish them without the stress of unpaid leave and unfair maternity leave. I beg of you to make this right.

Michele, Hagerstown

My son has Crohn's disease. He was diagnosed as a teenager (is a grown man now). Throughout High School he was in and out of the hospital and there were many MONTHS that he was not able to attend school but was able to keep up with his classes at home. During those times, I did not have paid leave, but my husband - a mail carrier did. So he was able to use some of his own sick days to stay in the hospital and keep him company, attend to family business, etc.

When my son was in college - he had to have two emergency surgeries due to complete bowel blockage and then his bowel burst - so rushed him back into surgery. No insurance, as by now he was too old to be on our insurance but we couldn't find anyone, at any coast who would cover his Crohn's. Hence the reason his health deteriorated as far as it did. We almost lost him - it was only a matter of hours.

Erica, Napa

A short couple of months ago, one of my children had an accident where she had to have surgery and was not able to go to school or complete any of her daily activities such as getting

up to go to the bathroom and getting herself dressed. I am a single parent and work full time. I had to take leave from working to care for her. If I didn't have paid family leave my other children would not be able to have food put on the table, much less a roof over their heads.

Desiree, Rockville

As a mother, I know how tight the family budget got when I had to take 6 weeks of UNPAID leave from work to care for my newborn son.

Jennifer, Glendale

As a WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor I see the majority of moms that actually make the amazing effort to Breastfeed stop because of the financial need to return to work quickly. Many of these women don't even have the option or accommodations made for them to pump at work. Its sad that our country does not invest more in the great preventive medicine of Breastmilk.

Rebecca, Baltimore

I am a freelance writer. Our family has delayed having its second children because I will not receive paid maternity leave. We need to save up enough to offset my salary before considering having a second child (our daughter is almost 5) If we had an unplanned pregnancy at this time, it would deplete our savings.

Elizabeth, Delmar

I had to quit my job and struggle live on a single income with two children and with lots of help from my family to breastfeed my baby for a whole year. To make ends meet we decided to raise a few chickens for eggs and meat and have a garden. Families need more options. We need a choice between selling our souls for a paycheck and quitting our jobs.

Marianne, Sykesville

I have a 16 day old baby. We can only afford for me to take 10 weeks off of work (unpaid) which will hopefully allow me to continue breastfeeding/pumping when I return to work. However, I know I am one of the lucky ones, even though this lucky circumstance is not ideally sufficient for me to be able to provide for the health and well-being of my infant now and for her future.

It is appalling to me that we have to sacrifice so much for so little time, when most other countries offer paid child rearing leave. We know that breastfeeding helps our children build immunity, and leads to fewer incidents of SIDS and learning disabilities. It is time that we value the mother and child AFTER birth. It is a worthy investment in our future that can help prevent more costly problems down the road.