

# MICHIGAN 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 Michigan and take them to heart. Our families are counting on you.**

## **Katie, Clinton Township**

FMLA was the first step. This is the next. People can't raise healthy and happy families if they can't afford maternity/paternity leave.

## **Cynthia, Portage**

My oldest son Connor had a life threatening pulmonary hemorrhage and was hospitalized for over 3 weeks, 2 of which on a vent. After this I had to stay home with him because his weight was low and he did not know how to feed from a bottle so I had

to take him to a OT for this. All of this took 5 plus weeks only some of which was paid putting even more of strain on my family.

## **Melissa, Lansing**

It was 1997 I was pregnant with twins, and in a new job. They had a liberal paid sick leave policy, but I hadn't worked there long enough to earn it. I got no paid time off. I was in bed rest for 6 weeks, and then took 9 weeks off after they were born - at which point I had to return to work because we were out of money. I'd had a difficult delivery and really could have used another few weeks off, but we were broke with medical bills (this was pre-ACA.) Paid leave should be available to everyone, not just those with longevity.

## **Sherri, Farmington Hills**

I have had 4 children and have been so blessed to have employment that allowed me time off. I've had to leave work for other circumstances such as a child with a serious health issue, a mom needing surgery, and a parent's death. My employer has been so supportive. I work as a high school teacher and we all help each other out when needed.

I can't even imagine the extra burden it would be if I wasn't covered or worse was afraid of losing my job. I'm fairly certain that policy makers are as fortunate as I am and I truly can't understand why this same benefit isn't a universal one. It just makes sense in the big picture of creating stable employees with stable lives.



**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](http://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

### ***Diane, Ann Arbor***

My mother was quite healthy and self-sufficient through her early 80's. At 84, she was diagnosed with heart trouble and prescribed meds, but doctors explained that a new medical regimen takes time to get right, and my mother demonstrated the pitfalls. Suddenly it became quite apparent that Mom needed help from her adult children while she adjusted to her meds. We were all far away except one, and that sibling had a large family to care for. So we rotated coming to be with Mom in person. I drove 300 miles when it was my turn.

My mother had just been discharged from the hospital after having gone off her meds and landing in emergency care. She was weak and disoriented. One of us needed to be present. I stayed with her for ten days until she again was hospitalized to straighten out her meds. During that week, I not only cooked for her, I listened to her concerns, read out loud to her while she tried to manage nausea and confusion, and waited several scary days to see a doctor. We were 30 miles from the doctors and hospital, because my mother was living her retirement years at our summer home, a beautiful spot on Lake Michigan, but "in the middle of nowhere" during a health crisis. That trip was payback for all that my mother did for me when I was growing up.

Fortunately, I had paid leave for that week because I was working at the university, and through a combination of paid sick time and vacation days, my time off was covered. This was such a valuable and necessary support while I responded to the crisis. I was lucky to have two sisters who don't work who could take turns before and after me.

But I personally needed to meet my ongoing financial obligations while taking care of her on an emergency, drop-everything-and-go basis, until my siblings and I worked quickly to put together a plan to support Mom. Our society needs to provide supports for these all important passages in our lives. Other countries are so much more advanced in providing for the nuances of life, including needs for family care. We need to support this in our country too.

### ***Colleen, Livinia***

One of the most deflating moments in my life was when I was about 7 months pregnant with my first child and a friend was about 8 months pregnant with her first child as well, and was training her job replacement. I asked her when she was coming back and she said she wasn't, because "a newborn baby doesn't belong in a daycare." It was like a punch in the gut. Of course it's true, a new baby should be with its mother. However, my response was that some of us can't afford the alternative

I had our health insurance through my job. My job, at the time, was paying the majority of our family's bills. There was no way that I could simply quit and stay home with my baby. And maybe I wouldn't want to, after all, I've been working steadily since I was 18 years old. What on earth would I do at home? As it came to pass, I did take my maximum allowed 3-month leave of absence. Unfortunately, this required me to apply for short-term disability which the money didn't come through for in a timely manner, causing me to become delinquent on some of my bills. I spent many hours searching high and low for an acceptable day care facility, finally landing a wonderful

unlicensed in-home day care. What an emotionally draining time. I had to leave my baby behind with strangers while I trudged along to work, breast pump in hand. While my office proved to be non-hostile toward pumping at work, it still caused a great deal of anxiety for me as the only place for me to pump was in a vacant office, next to attorneys who could clearly hear the noisy pump through the walls. It was freezing and uncomfortable sitting there shirtless trying to pump. I was only able to continue for about 2-3 months as my supply dwindled and dwindled down to nothing. It broke my heart.

And this is one of the better stories. I've heard horrible stories from others that make me cringe and cry. Yes, parents need to have family leave. Family is the most important thing in life.

### ***Gracella, Gross Pointe Woods***

I am lucky enough to work for a company that offers paid family leave. Unfortunately, they only pay 6 weeks. Fortunately for my husband and I, we lived in California at the time and we're eligible for paid family leave from the state. Life doesn't stop when we have a baby. I feel like one of the lucky ones, who got to take a full 12 weeks from work to recover (physically, mentally and emotionally) and bond with my baby girl. The thought of having to return to work at 6 weeks or to not get paid during that time is stressful, much less experiencing it. We did get a small glimpse of what it is like for families who do not receive paid paternity leave. My husband was not eligible to receive the paid paternity leave from the state of California because he is a contract employee. He was only able to take off two days before heading back to work because we needed his income.

### ***Kim, East Lansing***

Eight weeks after the birth of my child, I was back to work full time working two jobs in excess of 50 hours per week to support our family. It was exhausting, but I count myself among the lucky few. My employers provide paid leave. New mothers and fathers need this time. Thank you for your support.

### ***Kristi, Troy***

As an expectant mother, I will only receive 2 weeks of paid leave through my employer. However, that will be canceled out by the "vacation pay" I will be losing if my baby causes me to go into labor/leave work prior to December 20th (the day before break begins). If I don't work the 20th, I will be docked two weeks vacation pay, effectively canceling out my maternity leave pay. This is terribly unfair. My husband and I can afford for me to take off 6 weeks of unpaid FMLA, but if we lose the vacation pay, I will only be able to take 4 weeks. Imagine having to go back to work just 4 weeks (or less) after having your FIRST baby. It's a crime.

### ***Kristin, Macomb Township***

I am currently pregnant and significantly stressed over how we will pay bills and how much time I will be able to spend with my precious new baby. We are one of the most sophisticated countries in the world and yet we fall SO far behind on this topic. PLEASE vote to pass this so families don't have to stress so much due to illness or a new child.