To: Interested Parties
From: Lake Research Partners, MomsRising.org
Date: February 27, 2018
Re: Key Findings from Recent Qualitative Research

Lake Research Partners conducted six in-person dyads and seven in-person focus groups[1] in November and December of 2017 among members of the public on behalf of MomsRising.org with a goal of exploring how various constituencies including independents, republican-leaning people, as well as women of color, millennial parents, and sandwich generation caregivers view paid family and medical leave. We specifically wanted to explore how voters felt about a national paid family and medical leave insurance program that covers the full range of caregiving needs including the arrival of a new child as well as a person's own serious medical illness or that of a loved one. For a full breakdown of the group make-up and locations, please see the methodology section at the end of this memo.

Key Findings

Research conducted by the Pew Research Center[2] finds wide support paid family and medical leave. Our research shows that there are opportunities to build even stronger support, especially among women and fathers. A number of insights from the dyads and focus groups suggest there may be opportunities to further build support for paid family and medical leave among hard to reach constituencies. On the whole, while the concept of paid family and medical leave was highly popular with people of all genders, men proved more difficult to reach than women, but fathers are slightly more likely to support access to paid leave thanks to their personal experiences needing time off to care for their own children.

Initial framing is very impactful. Positioning participants in the personal frame of when they needed to provide care makes people even more favorable toward a program. Making the personal connection and focusing on all caregiving needs broadens support and makes people realize that this is something that is more urgently needed. People have a basic desire to care for their family and also have experience with caregiving situations.

The research also found that messaging impact can be maximized by establishing a values frame with a foundation in personal stories before promoting policies. The frames around "family," "stability," and

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[1] In opinion research, qualitative research seeks to develop insight and direction rather than quantitatively precise or absolute measures. Because of the limited number of respondents and the restrictions of recruiting, this research must be considered in a qualitative frame of reference. This study cannot be considered reliable or valid in the statistical sense. This type of research is intended to provide knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and opinions about issues and concerns.
The following limitations are inherent in qualitative research and are stated here to remind the reader that the qualitative data presented in this memo cannot be projected to any universe of individuals. Participants who respond to the invitation of a stranger to participate in this research show themselves to be risk takers and may be somewhat more assertive than non-participants. Some participants speak more often and more forcefully in focus group sessions than other participants, so their opinions tend to carry more weight in the findings. Participants "self-select" themselves. Participants were not selected randomly; as a result, each person in the pool of possible participants did not have an equal chance to be selected.
[2] Pew Research Center:
http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/03/23/americans-widely-support-paid-family-and-medical-leave-but-differ-over-specific-policies/

"treating everyone equally" were valued the most. In addition, the freedom to care for a loved one without risking one's job or financial stability is something people strongly believe in.

Across groups, job protection and alleviating fear from retaliation were critical parts of any paid leave program. The best words to describe a paid family and medical leave program include "valued," "all benefit," "alleviates fear,' and "for an emergency."

It is important to frame the issue so people think beyond maternity or paternity leave, noting that it will be there in case of an emergency. Alleviating fear and taking away the stress and worry are also important components.

Priming the issues and having people think about their own caregiving experiences helps as well and creates more intensity and more resistance to opposition.

Attitudes toward Paid Family and Medical Leave

Contextually, compared to a few years ago, most feel families are experiencing worse conditions in the current political and economic climate. The majority think things are getting worse financially for families, with stagnant wages, the rising costs of living, and uncertainty about healthcare affordability being top of mind. National security and general political turmoil were also raised as concerns today.

Though most have not heard much about states (including their own) doing something around access to paid family and medical leave, some recalled hearing something in their state or during the 2016 election around increasing access to paid leave for mothers and fathers.

All participants were able to share examples of times in their life when they needed to re-arrange their lives to recover from their own serious illness, provide care for a loved one, or to care for a new or adopted child. People are more supportive when in this frame of mind. When they needed to take time off from work, few reported being paid for that time.

Guilt, fear of losing their job because they need to take care of their family, or worrying about their family member who needs care while they are working are top concerns. Even those who are less supportive of a paid leave program advocate for employees having the option to take the time they need without fear of losing their job.

While paid family and medical leave is not the most important issue for all participants when they make their decisions about which candidate to vote for in an election, it is something most would look into if it were a talking point by all the candidates in the race. It is important to know where candidates stand. They say that views on this is a reflection of how candidates may approach other issues. They also feel it may reflect the general orientation of the candidate – being in touch, understanding what families today face, being up to date, and acting in the best interest of working people.

Reactions toward the Proposed Paid Leave Program

Participants were happy to hear businesses, researchers, advocates, and policymakers are considering a range of policies to address the need for paid family and medical leave.

We saw mixed reactions to the proposed program mainly due to lack of details in the description. Those most favorable are African American and Latina women who support paid family and medical leave but don't vote on it, married couples, and grandmother/daughters with young kids.

Many participants wanted more information and specifics about how it would be implemented.
- **Length of time -** In future communications, it needs to be clarified that this is an annual benefit as opposed to a lifetime benefit – every year an employee would be eligible to take up to 12 weeks a year.
- **Non-retaliation** - Some also shared worries around **company retaliation**.One of the main benefits they thought of the proposed paid leave program is the protection from sanctions.
- **Protect Small Businesses -** Some shared anxieties about the impact this program will have on **small businesses**, questioning how a small business could afford to "lose" an employee for 12 weeks. When thinking deeper about small businesses, people envisions companies with 5-10 employees. However, after more contemplation most think it would be beneficial to small businesses in the long run, evening the playing field against large corporations, and improving employee retention.

Study participants were hesitant to volunteer what they would be comfortable dedicating toward this program each month, but when they do volunteer amounts, prices ranged from 60 cents a paycheck to 40 dollars a week. After learning a national program like the proposed Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act would actually cost between $1-2 dollars a week, the amount seems very reasonable and doable to participants. Participants expressed surprise that the cost of the program was so low and affordable and wanted more information on the logistics of the program.

Most prefer a national program over a state-based program to ensure a set standard across states, noting many companies have branches that cross state lines. If a program like this was to be put in place, they want everyone to be able to access it. Those who prefer a state program, think it would allow for more flexibility and tailoring to the needs of that state.

The length of time covered, protections against retaliation, eligibility for all family types, and knowing both employees and employers will be making contributions rise to the top as the most important provisions of any paid leave program.

When asked to choose the words they thought would describe the proposed program, most choose "valued," "for an emergency," and "alleviates fear."

Reactions to Pro-Paid Family and Medical Leave Messaging

Messages that talk about helping your family, being there for your family, and point out the the range of caregiving needs a person may have over the course of their life – going beyond simply maternity leave, which is the default – resonate with people.

Among the dyad pairs, "Being there" and "Business perspective" messages tested best. They agree with the sentiment that people cannot spare a paycheck to care for a loved one and appreciate how the "business perspective" message highlights how the proposed national program would take the strain off of businesses.

While the men's groups were less supportive overall, "Business perspective" and "Families changed" rose to the top as top tier messages. "Being there" also tested well.

Examples:

[Business perspective] The lack of paid family and medical leave isn't just a problem for workers, it is also a problem for employers. When someone needs to quit their job to care for a family member, businesses lose talent, it costs money to replace and train workers, and it puts strain on everyone else at the company. A fund paid by taxes on workers and employers would take the strain off an individual business, and recognize that life happens for the people who work there.

[Families changed] Families have changed and it is time our employment standards change as well. Forty-two percent of new babies are born to single mothers and almost 80 percent of parents work full-time, many in several jobs. Additionally, as Americans are living longer, many workers have aging parents to care for. Families need tools to help meet their responsibilities and it is time our employment standards are updated to give people the flexibility they need through paid family and medical leave.

[Being there] One of the values we hold dear is the freedom to do what you think is right – especially when it comes to being there for your family. No one should keep you from a spouse battling cancer, a new baby needing attention, or a parent nearing their final days, but you are not free if you lose your job because you are providing care. Too many Americans can't spare pay to care for themselves or their family. That's why we need a law that guarantees you can be with your loved ones and still earn a living while you do it.

Language Recommendations

Do	Don't
Include how this program is good for business.	Ignore the real concerns people have around impacts to small businesses/employers.
Broaden to cover all types of caregiving.	Focus only on women and maternity leave.
Say we need this program so people can be there for their family.	Use terms like "modern family" that confuse people. It's just a family.
Share personal stories and experiences with caregiving.	Focus on participation without introducing the low costs of the program.
Lead with values. Establish the frame around "family," "stability," and "treating everyone equally" values.	Refer to the program as a trust fund or savings account.
Talk about a national program, highlighting how this will prevent company retaliation and address abuse prevention.	Talk only about state programs.
Highlight how the program will alleviate fear and take away stress and worry.	

Message Triangle

Being There

One of the values we hold dear is the freedom to do what you think is right – especially when it comes to being there for your family. No one should keep you from a spouse battling cancer, a new baby needing attention, or a parent nearing their final days, but you are not free if you lose your job because you are providing care. Too many Americans can't spare pay to care for themselves or their family. That's why we need a law that guarantees you can be with your loved ones and still earn a living while you do it.

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Support the Program

Business Perspective

The lack of paid family and medical leave isn't just a problem for workers, it is also a problem for employers. When someone needs to quit their job to care for a family member, businesses lose talent, it costs money to replace and train workers, and it puts strain on everyone else at the company. A fund paid by taxes on workers and employers would take the strain off an individual business, and recognize that life happens for the people who work there.

Methodology

Lake Research Partners conducted six in-person dyad pairs in November 2017 segmented as:

November 27th – Charlotte, North Carolina
- White baby boomer grandmother and her Gen X or Millennial daughter who is also a mother.
- Women of color friends who support paid family and medical leave but do not vote on the issue.

November 28th – Denver, Colorado
- White senior friends who believe family and medical leave is a private responsibility.
- White college educated married couple; wife is supportive of paid family and medical leave while husband is less supportive.

November 30th – Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- White non-college educated married couple; Wife is supportive of paid family and medical leave while husband is less supportive.
- "Sandwich generation" women friends who are both mothers of young children and providing care for an older relative or spouse.

Following the dyad pairs, Lake Research Partners conducted seven in-person focus groups in December 2017 segmented as:

December 12th – Denver, Colorado
- Latina women.
- Married fathers of young children (under the age of 10).

December 14th – Manchester, New Hampshire
- Married white weak Republican women.
- White independent men who are not strongly opposed to paid family and medical leave.

December 19th – Raleigh, North Carolina
- Married independent women.
- White Republican men who are not strongly opposed to paid family and medical leave.
- African American women.

Participants were recruited to reflect a mix of age, educational background, and family composition.

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