

# NORTH CAROLINA 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 North Carolina and take them to heart. Our families are counting on you.**

## *Virginia, Charlotte*

I took 18 months away from my professional life to care for my mother in the early stages of Alzheimer's. I don't regret putting my family first, and it came with a significant economic price.

## *Rose, Lenoir*

In 2012 I was bedridden for a few weeks after my discharge from rehab following an orthopedic surgery complication. I was not eligible for home care, my medical needs weren't deemed serious. My husband used vacation days and holiday time to stay home and care for me. He was disciplined by the

company later in the year for taking off too much time. Workers should not have to worry about repercussions at work when they need time off to care for a sick family member.

## *Viviana, Cary*

I was a resident of NJ until recently, and when I had my daughter 4 years ago, that state's generous family leave allowance gave me an extra month with my daughter. We benefited greatly as a family, spending time together, and being able to attend doctor's visits without worrying about taking time off from work, being able to bond over experiences together at our leisure, getting on proper feeding schedules and sleep schedules. It should be something all families have a right to.

## *Elaine, Forest Knolls*

When I was pregnant with my last child, I worked as a nurse in a public university hospital. I had no paid leave. In order to have 12 weeks of maternity leave, an employee would have to not take any vacation or any sick leave and never be called off for 2 and a half years to have leave in reserve. I had a complicated pregnancy and had to use leave days for medical appointments and pregnancy related illness, so I barely had enough for the six weeks mandated post c-section. My husband used his sick and vacation leave to help me for the first few weeks at home when I couldn't lift anything, including the baby. It's a struggle to plan that far in advance, and to not take off for any reason for multiple years. It is impossible to have work life balance under this pressure and that makes pressured workers and stressed out human beings.



**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

### **Patricia, Leland**

In 1997 my beloved mother who was living alone, out of state, suffered a stroke in the middle of the night. She lay in her condo for hours until a neighbor entered her condo with a key because she did not answer her phone or her door. I was called immediately and flew to her home in FL. a few hours later. She was in the hospital and remembered nothing about what had happened to her. She kept asking for my father who had died 9 years before. I brought her back to NC and settled her into an assisted living facility in Chapel Hill where I lived with my family.

I tried to continue teaching my first grade class, but my mother needed daily attention over and above what her A.L. facility could provide. They provided medications, food, bathing, most laundry and cleaning services, but I provided all her personal care and appointments, as well as making all her decisions for her. I was there every day, all day and had to give up my teaching job and my own life. I never earned another dollar ever again. It would have been a huge relief for my husband if I had been able to be paid for the care I gave my mother for the next 8 years.

We did not take any vacations for several years until we felt it was safe to leave for a few days. It never failed that when we were away, something major always happened to call us back immediately. It was extremely difficult for my family to always have a priority above any of them. I will not bore you with the details of her care, operations and "therapies". My sisters lived too far away to do anything except visit. My mother never recovered completely from her stroke and she died by inches every day for 8 years with her major issue of dementia in the form of Louis Body disease.

I would not wish my mother's outcome on anybody else. It sucked the life and happiness out of me. Thank goodness my husband visited her every day he worked. He always stopped in to see her, thus allowing me a few daylight hours to myself- a rare treat. Paid Family Leave would have allowed us to hire temporary nurses to look after her so I could have a life for a few weeks a year, but that never happened for me. I had to be put on major antidepressants starting in 1997.

It was an incredibly, constantly sad and difficult time for us all. My incredible intelligent, educated and talented mother suffered everyday of her life over those eight years until she died in 2005. Assisted living is incredibly expensive, no matter how "reasonable" the costs and fees are. My mother's housing costs alone were \$1,456,00.00 for 8 years!! It should not ever be that way for anyone!!

### **Sarah, Greensboro**

When my youngest child was born, I went back to work in 3 weeks because there was no such thing as paid family leave. I was worried about losing my job and the income! So for that entire year, I dragged through every day. One student wrote on my evaluation, "She needs to get some energy!" My subsequent was whenever I saw a pregnant faculty member, I urged them to insist on taking at least a full semester off.

The college where I taught for 34 years has given semesters off with pay for three years. They were not even in compliance

with the 1996 Family and Medical Leave Act! I advocated not to term pregnancy as "Disability" and force faculty to go on short-term disability and for full compliance with the best practices in our profession for all faculty members, men and women!!

### **Barbara, Charlotte**

When my son was in a motorcycle accident, I took FMLA, for 3 months without pay. I had to give up my apartment and moved to Raleigh to take care of my son. Because it was without pay, it on kept my job, but no income. It was a very difficult period for me to be without income so I could not afford to pay my rent, light bill or gas bill.

So I made the ultimate sacrifice to take care of my child that was paralyzed from the neck down. He had to learn how to do everything again. Use his hands and arms. How to walk again. How to make a bowel movement, how to urinate. It was a trying time for me. I became homeless! But I thank God that He saw us through this trying time.

The insurance company did not cover my son. We had to signed up for disability. I struggle through this period of non paid leave. I believe that everyone should have paid leave in there time of need. It's the reasonable thing to do. Other countries have it. Let's fight to pass this policy. I'm with Moms-Rising! Thank for letting me share. My son is on disability and thank God I'm retired. I will continue to fight the good fight for the cause.

### **Meryl, Weaverville**

Dad was laid off when he took earned time off to care for my Mom. Had the job 35 years. Mom lost her job due to her stroke. She was 59. He was too proud to tell her and did not want to add to her stress. So he pretended to go to work when he went to the unemployment office. He never was laid off. Family crisis! They had to sell their home downsize and Move.

This is not right! We deserve better!

### **LeAnna, Durham**

I had to use my vacation time for FMLA leave when I had my babies. After the birth of my first child, I had saved almost enough vacation time to cover the entire three months. But that left me with no vacation time afterwards. Because it got quickly drained away with needs that sick days weren't enough to cover that my first child needed, I didn't have nearly enough vacation time saved when I had my second child three and a half years later.

I couldn't take the full three months I needed and had to return to work with a severe case of postpartum depression. The time that I did take was mostly unpaid and hurt us a great deal financially as well, as my daughter was born in the winter, a time she my husband, who paints houses for a living, typically does not have much work.

Having paid time off would have helped so much. It truly benefits the entire family. And would be a tremendous benefit for employers to offer.