

NEW JERSEY 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 New Jersey and take them to heart. Our families are counting on you.**

Louise, Princeton

Our adopted daughter was just 3 years old when my husband nearly died. We were very lucky we had family leave insurance and had recently bought emergency insurance (which the company tried to deny us, saying we must have known that he was going to get sick 3 months later!). I was unable to work, between caring for him and caring for our very difficult daughter. If we hadn't had family leave insurance and some savings, I really don't know what would have happened. As it was, we spent down all our savings and had to start over, and he and she are alive and well today.

BJ, Basking Ridge

I had paid leave and job security when our son was born. I went back to work, and kept my career on track. And it was a good thing I did, because when our son was 12 years old, my husband, his father, died of leukemia and I needed that job.

Paula, Kearny

I just had to use paid family leave for my son who had open heart surgery. It is amazing that it was paid although I only received the money when I returned to work. It helped us continue to pay our bills and catch up. It's great would be better if the money arrived promptly to help with daily expenses.

Michelle, Flanders

I am lucky to live in NJ, which has paid leave. I had a c-section and could not have returned to work right away had I wanted to.

Cari, Piscataway

After the birth of my son he stayed in the NICU for a month and our family had to make hard choices about when his dad would take vacation days to help care for me after the birth and make sure we were with our son every day at the NICU. I know that we were luckier than many other NICU families where the dad was unable to take any time. Families should not have to struggle in this way while dealing with health challenges. We can and should do better as a nation to ensure families can prioritize each other after the birth of a child or during a health crisis.



**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

Giselle, Maywood

I am full-time working mom and just this past year in September I had a baby. Luckily, thru my employer and the state of NJ I received paid Family Leave. This was a blessing for me because I had 12 weeks to first of all recover from a C-section and also bond with my new baby. Because I did not have to worry about where my income was coming from to support my two other children, I was able to have a good pregnancy, delivery and recovery period.

Now I am back at work at my current position that I had when I left. I also have been able to find quality day care for my baby which I most likely would not have found if I had to rush to find someone. I CANNOT imagine having a baby and rushing back to work right after because lack of income. That would have only caused stressed for myself, my baby, and my family. I probably would have been forced to make a decision that would have negatively affected my family.

I believe that every parent should have an opportunity to enjoy the first weeks of their baby life without the added stress of money and job security. The statistics are sad and disappointing. Something has to change in this country.

Lauren, Mercerville

As a parent of a medically complex child, I know how important NJ paid family leave was for us. As an advocate for other families, I know how important it is for all parents of special needs children to have access to paid family leave.

Becky, Collingswood

[When my mother died] I made it a point to go down to Trenton and be there to have my photo taken. Family Leave was too late for me...I had to return to work or I would lose my job. I do not want my children to ever be in a similar situation of being pressured to choose between family and job security.

Yanira, Fort Lee

As a pregnant woman expecting my first child I can only hope and pray that paid leave will pass soon. The company I work for does not provide paid leave and because I got pregnant only one month after starting this new job I might have to shorten my unpaid leave. I have to have a cesarean and I might have to stay at the hospital for 5 days or more.

This situation should not be stressful at a time where I should wonder how I'm going to be able to go back to work after a cesarean. It's shameful that the US is the only country that is so far behind in so many important issues including paid leave.

Most third world countries have treated women with more dignity and respect than the US. My parents actually are from one of those countries and that third world country gives paid maternity leave of 12 weeks.

Krista, Fords

I am a NYC Department of Education teacher who is forced to take my sick days in order to take a "paid" maternity leave, but there is a cap on the number of consecutive days I can take. In addition, if I need more days for any reason, than I owe the department of education days, will be in the negative days in my bank or be docked pay. What happens when my kids get sick or I get sick? I am a public servant who takes care of others children on a daily basis, but yet I am backed into a corner when it comes time to take care of my own children? Is that fair?

Please help support paid maternity and paternity leave, because someone like me cannot afford to take unpaid family leave, but really wants to be there for her children the way I am for other people's kids.

L. Young, Cranford

I am part of the sandwich generation. I had a small child who was often sickly. I could not stay home with him when he was sick and needed to give his care to others. I also guardian to my disabled brother. I needed to use vacation days to take him to the doctor.

Not everyone has the option of using vacation days individually. These types of families need help. We are the only country that does not support families. Shame on us. Congress and heads of departments are wealthier than average Americans. You should visit with your constituents, not just donors, to see what we need.

Andrew, Livingston

I believe that our current women-only leave policies also have long term effects on women's career advancement. Paid leave for all caregivers will lead to more gender equity in the workplace. I want that for my daughters.

Thora, Totowa

I extend a personal thank you for enacting paid leave. It allowed me to stay home with my son for longer than I expected. It was time with him that I will never forget! I hope NJ paves the way for other states.