

NEW YORK 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 York and take them to heart. Our families are counting on you.**

Jennifer, Buffalo

In 1995 I was hit by a car as a pedestrian. I was off of work for over a year. I had 10 surgeries. I had a disability policy that I discovered. It was only 750 dollars a month. Thank goodness I had that or I would not have had anything. We need paid family leave for tragedies and medical catastrophes.

Lenora, Jamaica

My husband had prostate cancer while I was working with the N.Y. Board of Education. I was given two weeks off to take him



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 www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2016/09/22/143877/the-cost-of-inaction/.

to his treatments. He was weak couldn't eat, cried a lot all hope seemed lost. The Board of Education had no sympathy, no help.

Theresa, Coam

In On Sept. 11, 1997, my husband and I arrived at JFK Airport with our 2 Russian-born children, ages 5 and 7. The school district I worked in at the time as an elementary school teacher, DID NOT OFFER ANY PAID LEAVE FOR FOREIGN ADOPTIONS. Neither did my husband's counseling agency. He returned to his work two days later, Sept. 13. We needed his income for the next month to live on. I stayed home with the children, who spoke basically no English for the next 2 weeks, to register them for school, get Social Security registration for each of them, take them for physical checkups, get them outfitted for school, etc., etc., etc.

We only had to make ONE TRIP to Russia (others we know had to make TWO), but our children were in an orphanage in a Russian Republic in Siberia, so we had TWO plane rides, getting there and coming back.

How much did the whole process cost, you may ask? I stopped counting after \$25,000! We took out a loan against my retirement fund and were able to pay it off within the 5 year limit. (We were an older couple with one parent still alive; she was living on her monthly Social Security check, so no financial aid from family) Our children are adults now, and we have 3 beautiful grandsons. BU, having PAID FAMILY LEAVE certainly would have made the whole process, perhaps, a little less stressful!

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

Safia, Astoria

When I was giving birth to my first child, I did not get paid time off back in 2007. It was horrible, we were already in a massive amount of debt. On top of it, not being able to receive compensation to help us survive our day-to-day lives. We saw that our debt and increased more and more overtime, leading to us having terrible credits, not having enough money to buy enough food, clothing necessities, household items and other needed expenses. All developing countries have some assistance placed for their citizens in need except for America. We are supposed to be the land of opportunity but this nation officials wastes no time turning their backs on their citizens.

Theresa, New York

I had paid family leave in 1996, enabling me to be with my mother when she was dying in a hospice.

Tai, Long Island City

As an interracial couple in the 1980s, my husband and I faced relentless discrimination: my husband was paid a lower salary than his white colleagues; and my parents, who disapproved of my marriage, were not as financially helpful as they could have been. I was in graduate school, and so did not qualify for subsidized child care (which was only available to women in associate-degree programs).

For the six years I was writing my dissertation, our family of four managed on \$27K annually, & I made up for the absence of affordable childcare by working on my thesis until 4 AM three times weekly. My health suffered; I developed dangerous infections; I was hospitalized five times. Family leave was not available in those days for graduate students--indeed, I was lucky not to be expelled from my program for having my daughters in graduate school. But a benefits such as the FAMILY Act would have made a huge difference.

Wendee, Springwater

My Mom was bedridden for the last five years of her life. I would have loved to be able to take time off from work, or quit my job to help care for her in her final years. She lived in CT, and I live in New York, and my employer did not pay for sick time or time off. So the only option would be for me to quit my job. Financially I couldn't do that either, so unfortunately my mom was able to stay at home but with the care from home health aides, not me.

I deeply regret not being for her in her final years. She is the only Mother that I will ever have, and it is very sad that she always was there for me, yet because of the way many employers operate, I wasn't able to be there for her when she needed me most. Please support the Family Leave Act so that no one else is denied the opportunity to care for their sick or dying

family members because of financial hardships and possible job loss if employees take time off for these purposes.

Patricia, Postdam

My son-in-law had to leave his banking job to help care for his mother who was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. My daughter became the sole income provider and it was very tough for the three years until her death. The only way they were able to do it was because they could eliminate childcare expenses.

Melissa, Central Square

Now, my son and I are fighting my battle. Atypical post-concussive syndrome. I rank with NFL players with severe concussion and have to travel from my home in Syracuse NY to UMPC in Pittsburgh regularly for medical appointments and treatment. He, a Bank Mgr. has to take time off from his job to drive me there because my left eye closes and the headaches are severe. Not having paid leave would be devastating for him. Having it would be a blessing. Thank God we live in NY.

Illene, Brooklyn

I spent every day by my mother's side during the month she was in hospice - helping her eat, rubbing her feet, making sure her pain medication was increased when necessary and maintaining communication with the rest of my family. I am one of the lucky ones. Everyone at work was totally supportive, both administratively and emotionally, and I experienced no pressure to return before I was ready. It was a great comfort to know that I could be with her until the end. And I was. I held her hand as she opened her eyes to see me one last time, and took her final breaths. I miss mom, but have no regrets. We said everything we needed to say to each other and our last days together were filled with love.

Emily, Plattsburgh

When my son was 2 years old we moved to Connecticut because I was starting a new job. Shortly after the move he got a terrible cough which was extremely frequent when he was younger, due to his asthma. Unfortunately it became pneumonia and I was told by the pediatrician that I needed to take care of him for a couple of weeks to nurse him back to health.

I am a single Mom, and when I called HR they told me that because I was new not only did I have no leave time, but also that my job was not guaranteed. It was horrifying and deeply unfair, paid, accessible family leave needs to be a priority! Fortunately I was able to keep the job, but what if this had not been the case?