

PENNSYLVANIA 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 Pennsylvania and take them to heart. Our families are counting on you.**

Susan, Furlong

Not having access to paid leave forced me to liquidate my retirement assets so I could care for my newborn. In addition, my husband not having access to support me at home during that time placed major emotional stress on our family. Shortly after my son was born my older son began showing signs of his later diagnoses of Autism. I was home alone with my newborn and my two year old who was struggling with major behavioral challenges due to his Autism. If we had paid leave we could have cared for both of our children better without liquidating future financial resources.

Devera, Carlisle

I had to travel from PA to MS to care for my father during his recovery from major surgery while I was working full time. Paid Family Leave made it possible for me to stay as long as necessary, receive a paycheck and not lose my job while I was away.

Due to the length of my stay I also had to use vacation time so the rest of my family did not suffer too much financially, but I could not have made the trip and cared for my father without this important benefit.

Stephanie, Erie

I had adult son needed a kidney transplant. He has a learning disability. And he needed someone to be there with him. Plus he is my son. He was in the hospital for a week and was released and ended with infection so her was the hospital for another week. We had to go to Pittsburgh both times. We live in Erie that's 2 hours away. I had to take off work I did not get paid for it.

Stephanie, Philadelphia

Being a sickle cell patient with 3 children, I've had to use up all my time when I got sick or when the kids were sick I had to use vacation time. I could never hold onto enough time to actually take vacations.

After surgeries or maternity leave I wouldn't have any time left so I would have to use projected days. I would owe time before the next year rolled around.



**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

Kathleen, Pittsburg

My daughter-in-law cobbled together enough vacation & sick day time to go along w/ her 6 week maternity leave to stay home w/ my grandson, her newborn for almost 3 mos. My son cobbled together his sick and vacation time and took unpaid family leave for 6 weeks. Other first world nations recognize the healthy outcomes for parents and babies to spend lots of time together following birth and support these healthy outcomes by legislating paid family leave. I wish my son hadn't felt he had to return to work when his son was only 6 weeks old. I wish my daughter-in-law hadn't had to return to full time work when her baby was just 3 mos. old. Now they cobble together day care arrangements because the US does not deem child care a governmental priority. middle class and working class families deserve support.

Julie, Mechanicsburg

When our first son was born in 2016, I was able to take 12 weeks of leave from my job as a teacher. However, in order to take paid leave, I had to use up sick days that I had been saving for years, and even then I was only allowed to use them for six weeks (the time I was considered medically disabled following giving birth). My husband was even less fortunate. He is also a teacher, but had just started at a new school district that fall. He had already used his allotted personal days, so the district allowed him to take two unpaid personal days following the birth of our son. How gracious of them.

I prayed for months that our son would be born on a weekend so that we would have a little extra time with my husband there to help. Luckily my son was born on a Saturday morning, but unluckily he was jaundiced and losing more weight than the doctors wanted, so we had to stay in the hospital an extra day. When the pediatricians came to do their rounds on Tuesday, they told me they thought we should stay one more day for observation. I burst into tears and begged them to discharge us because my husband had to go back to work the next day.

I couldn't fathom having to get my car from the parking garage, take the baby home, and be home with the baby for the first time all on my own. I wasn't even supposed to be driving for two weeks. Our parents don't live close enough to easily help out and at the time they were all still working. My husband couldn't take any sick days to stay home and help - his school district didn't allow employees to use sick days for family until they had spent one year there.

When I went back to work the next school year our son went to daycare, and my husband and I both quickly used up our sick days caring for him when he got sick. If you've ever had a child in daycare you know that they catch everything and have to be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning. I had no sick days left at the end of that school year.

I found out the next summer, summer of 2017, that we were expecting our second son. Surprise! We were both terrified because daycare for two costs more than our mortgage and I had no saved sick days, only the 10 I get every year, half of which I had to use just to get to my prenatal appointments. That meant I would not be paid at all for my maternity leave, and the four of us would have to live on one income. A time that

should have been exciting and happy was scary and stressful because we were so worried about the costs. There was then of course the ridiculous but necessary question - could we afford for me to go back to work? I love my job, but essentially I'd be working to pay for daycare. I have a Masters degree and I don't make enough money to cover the outrageous cost of daycare for two.

The whole thing is ridiculous. If I had been able to take paid leave without using up my sick days, things would have been so much easier for our family. If my husband had been allowed any leave at all, my first few weeks home as a new mom would have been less of a struggle. Other countries find a way to make paid maternity leave happen, so why can't "the greatest" country?"

Georgina, Harrisburg

When you start carrying a little life inside you, your world changes. I started working 2 jobs knowing that I wanted to take my 2 1/2 months of maternity leave that I wouldn't get paid for. Working 2 jobs while pregnant isn't easy. And when your body shuts down and your baby comes a month and a half early it gets even harder. I think to received paid leave maybe a woman should be signed to her job for 2 years as long as she is healthy and capable. Even just 1/2 of what I got paid hourly would've been helpful.

But by the end of my leave it made it hard to enjoy time with my baby when I was scrounging for every last penny. A man can be there for his lady and his baby. But until you are a mom and experience the cramps, your stomach stretching, your hips widening, your body literally changing before your eyes... which is such a beautiful thing and such a hard thing after the baby is born. Mentally a woman goes through so much. Some woman can't mentally handle adding work to such a situation so soon. A woman needs time with her baby. The hormones it produces are so good for her and the baby. We are literally working on little humans who should have our whole attention.

Jennifer, Biglerville

I am a single woman who has become a caregiver to my elderly mother and disabled brother. I have been at my current job for over six years and have vacation time that I can use each year. However, twice in the past few years I have used up all of my vacation time to deal with family issues. The first year this happened I was given the option of making up time (working extra hours to repay the hours I needed to take for family and personal appointments). I did this and ended up getting very sick and burned out.

I am in this situation again this year and have learned, not through my employer; but through a medical provider, that unpaid FLMA is a possibility for me. Knowing that I can take the time I need for myself and my family is critical as I need to keep myself employed; however, not being paid for my time off creates another issue. No one should have to choose between whether or not to attend to medical needs for themselves and their families and certainly should not have to go into debt just to make ends meet when times are tough.