

VIRGINIA FAMILIES NEED PAID FAMILY LEAVE

Right now only 15% 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 Virginia and take them to heart. Our families are counting on you.**

Susan, Richmond

I am a Family Doctor. I had 3 kids while owning a private medical practice. Each time I took 6 weeks off to recover and ensure the baby was doing well, then I headed back to the office. Why? Because for 6 weeks I was not getting paid and further more, I was not earning money to pay my staff. As a doctor, fortunately I make enough money to forefit pay for 6 weeks, but how I envy my family doctor friends in Sweden or England who all got paid maternity leaves of 6 to 12 MONTHS to enjoy their children. As a doctor, I also have heard

hundreds of horror stories from my patients of how they lost a job or had severe financial problems because they had a surgical delivery or the baby was not doing well. As a country, we can do better than this. The European's do it.

Cynthia, Aylett

I had surgery in May 2010. Because insurance requires that your doctor try all resolutions possible before 'major surgery', I'd exhausted my leave time trying all other options that didn't work. Therefore, I had no leave time when I had to have surgery as the last result. I was really stressed out and worried about if I was going to have a job, how was I going to provide for my kids over the next couple of months, how my bills were going to get paid. I called social services for help and because I had a job I was denied any help even though I wasn't getting paid to be out for surgery. For what little savings I had was totally exhausted.

I've worked on my job for 6 years and never missed time from work unless it was for my kids or a short vacation. This left me with no choice but to return back to work against my doctors release of me because I needed funds to provide for my family. Because of this the surgery turned out to be unsuccessful and I'm still having problems. I work really hard for this company to not help me or seem as if they don't care. Even if I they would've paid me half my check, I'd been thankful for it. I'm still struggling trying to get my finances back on track, as well as my health.



**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 #PaidFamilyLeave. For more stories from your state visit www.MomsRising.org

MomsRising.org | MamásConPoder.org

[1] U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017, September). Employee Benefits in the United States National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2017 (Tables 16 and 32). Retrieved 16 October 2017, from <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2017/ebbl0061.pdf>; [2] <http://inthesetimes.com/article/18151/the-real-war-on-families> [3] http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/public_policy_institute/lrc/2013/fmla-insight-keeping-up-with-time-AARP-ppi-lrc.pdf

Anna, Barboursville

I have 'Paid Leave' which means that I am supposedly one of the lucky ones. However, earning that leave was not easy. I took no real vacation for a year before my child's birth so that I could save up enough time to take 3 months off with my newborn. That meant going to work even when I was sick and very pregnant.

Then after I returned from leave I once again could not take any days off for a very long time, especially since I wanted to have another child two years later. It shouldn't be that hard to just spend a few precious weeks bonding with your child.

Stacy, Mechanicsville

When I had my son, the company I worked for had no paid leave options available at all. I was lucky in that they allowed me to use my personal and vacation time, but the missing income forced me to return to work after only 8 weeks; well before either myself or my child was ready.

I was exhausted, and depressed that I had to leave my tiny child at home well before I was ready for that step (Frankly, I don't believe 12 weeks is sufficient either) I made only slightly more money than my husband, and daycare costs for an infant totaled more than three quarters of my income, and were equal to my husbands pay.

Because of that fact, we were forced to make the difficult decision to work opposite shifts, resulting in two exhausted parents (he worked all night and stayed home with the baby during the day, I worked all day and nursed all night). At my current place of employment I have disability insurance. Even this will only cover 5 weeks of maternity leave. It shocked me when I found out how much more family friendly other nations were when it came to pay, and amount of time given for maternity/paternity leave. Actually, it sickens me.

Joyce Roanoke

I didn't have it for my 1st child and it made life a lot more stressful. Things were a lot smoother with the second when I had maternity leave and was able to heal w/o the additional stress of worrying about finances.

Morgen, Morton

I developed HELLP syndrome and my son was born 7 wks early and spent 3 wks in the NICU and another 11 days in the PICU at 2 mos old. He came home on meds and an apnea monitor. I spent 18 wks on maternity leave and he was still required to be on meds when he went to daycare. I was a federal employee so, while I was granted leave, I was not paid for it - not an option given our finances and the cost of living in the DC area.

Thankfully both my parents worked for the same agency and were about to retire so they donated unused leave to me so that I could stay home. Without it, I'm not sure what we would have done to pay the bills. For more info on supporting families of premature infants: www.preemiestoday.com

Karen, Arlington

Being able to take paid time off after the birth of both of my daughters was crucial to all of us. I needed the time to recover and bond with my baby girls, and they needed me around to get a good start in life. They are growing up into beautiful, smart, healthy girls, and I attribute at least some of that to my ability to properly nurse them for their first few months of life.

If I'd been more stressed or had to return to work sooner, this would have almost certainly taken a toll on my ability to nurse them. Nursing babies is hard work, and pumping is even tougher. Let's make sure ALL our babies have the chance to start out right -- with nurturing and nursing in those first few critical months. P.S. like many mothers these days, I'm the primary breadwinner, so without paid leave, I would have certainly had to return to work sooner. Let's help all our families and ensure moms have paid leave... it will pay off in the long run!

Kindell, Hillsville

I was hired as a waitress when I was about 3 months pregnant. I let them know so when I needed the time off it wouldn't be a surprise. I worked my butt off for this place and quickly rose to bar manager. As I was about to begin training for management my boss decided I should go ahead and take my (unpaid) leave. I was a week away from my due date and he was terrified that I would go into labor while at the restaurant.

Two days before my due date I received a phone call saying they needed help and were very short-handed, so I went in. The next morning I went into labor and at 7:58 delivered a beautiful, healthy baby boy. When he was just 3 weeks old, I received a phone call saying if I did not come into work tomorrow I could kiss my promotion good bye.

I went in the next day, after only 3 weeks leave, still in pain, still recovering, only to find they had already given my promotion to another waitress who had been there less than 1 month. I was devastated. I worked so hard for these people. I took 3 weeks maternity leave to go back to job where I was on my feet for 6 to 7 hours at a time to have my door of opportunity slammed in my face.

Needless to say, as soon as I found another job, I was out of there. A woman should not be punished for having a child. Especially when that woman was hired while pregnant and gave full disclosure to the management. Had it not been for what they did to me, I could've already been working up from bar manager to general manager, finally getting a decent paycheck and benefits.

Stacey, Falls Church

In 1999, my daughter was hit by a car and suffered a traumatic brain injury. I was working in DC at the time and had to take time off to make sure my daughter had the proper care. No pay. I was lucky, I had the support of my family. A lot of folks are not that lucky. Life happens and when it does, the hard working people of DC need to have that support if they ever need it.