

WASHINGTON 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 Washington and take them to heart. Our families are counting on you.**

Heather, Spokane

My 3-year-old daughter was diagnosed with kidney cancer. I'm a single mom of three young children. I had to relocate to Seattle to take her to Children's Hospital. It was one week and I had taken all of my sick leave, then a few more days until I'd taken all my vacation pay. I had no leave left so I had to continue to work. I commuted 300 miles every week for about 16 months. Not having paid family leave devastated us in many ways. I can't capture the impact of not being able to be with my daughter or my other kids on their growth and development.

Martha, Shelton

Three years ago, my very good friend was terminally ill and so her son, daughter, daughter-in-law [my daughter] all took FMLA to help care for her the last few weeks of her life. None of them had very much paid leave, if any at all. They had to deal with the pain of losing a loved one and the stress of trying to catch up with bills. Today, they are still having a very rough time financially. I see the pain and stress in their lives as they struggle to make ends meet. If they would have had paid leave, it would have lessened the burden that they are feeling.

Amanda, Federal Way

I am very lucky to be working in a supportive workplace. When I had my son six weeks early they were very flexible and gave me all the time I needed. I was able to take two and a half months off to spend time in the NICU with my son then be at home while he grew stronger. The only problem was that I did not get paid for any of that time. We went into debt due to hospital bills and my lost paychecks. We will be paying this off for a while. The birth of my amazing baby boy has been a roadblock toward us potentially buying a house because of this debt. We will get there someday but the road keeps getting longer.

Sarah, Liberty Lake

My husband has cancer. He is working when he shouldn't because we have no paid leave - and he is a software architect, leading a software division in a small company. This should not be the case.



**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

Angela, Seattle

As a currently pregnant mother, the reality of preparing for maternity leave means banking my vacation hours, working overtime, and scheduling my many doctors appointments in the early morning to avoid taking extra time off. Childbirth is expensive and the last thing families need at a time of huge costs is a giant hole in their budget.

Jessica, Port Angeles

I have had two children now with no paid maternity leave. I was forced to use all of my sick and vacation time and then was on leave without pay. Each birth was a cesarean birth and over half of my leave was spent recuperating from major abdominal surgery. I am now back to work for the second week after the birth of my daughter.

I have zero sick or vacation time to take in case I need to care for my children or myself in the next month. I have to pay my own health insurance as well because I was short on hours. That is a heavy load for a new mom. Parenting is the most rewarding and satisfying role I can imagine. I wish it were made a little easier by providing paid maternity leave.

Adriana, Washington

When my mother was dying, I had no access to paid leave and – quite frankly – not caring for her was not an option. With the cost of daycare for my three children, I literally could not work without the option to take paid leave because financially it didn't make sense. My family was able to make it on my husband's salary alone, but it was a challenge. It also meant we weren't able to save as much for our children's college funds or our own retirement.

My father is now in hospice and I am also his primary caregiver, but there is one key difference: I was able to find a job at a local home-care company that offers paid family and medical leave. With paid leave, I can do a job that I love, give my employer my very best, and go home every day with the peace of mind that I can put my family first when I need to most.

Every day at my work, I see families from across our community struggling to care for their aging family members because they have no options. No one should be forced to choose between caring for their family and providing for them. With paid family and medical leave for all, they won't have to. And our families, businesses, communities, our economy, and, most importantly, our children will be stronger for it.

Sarah, Olympia

As a lactation consultant, I hear daily about the struggles moms have to balance breastfeeding with working. Women in higher pay scales tend to have more time off, more flexibility in their schedules, and therefore to be more able to give the health benefits of breastfeeding to their babies (and to themselves).

At the same time, women who earn low-incomes, are young,

who are just entering to workforce, have very little flexibility, options for part time work, opportunities to pump or store milk while at work. They are less likely to be able to continue to breastfeeding and give their babies breastmilk. Please, increase the potential for women to make the most healthful choice for themselves and their babies, regardless of the earning power and their workplaces.

Having extended duration of breastfeeding saves everyone costs in the long run, with reduced absenteeism from work, fewer hospital stays and office visits for children, reduced rates of certain cancers for mothers. Make paid family leave a reality in the US and help us have healthier moms and babies!

Beth, Federal Way

As a brand new first time mom this issue is so important to me. My husband and I had no paid leave when we had our son in August and I've encountered many breast feeding issues which have been nearly impossible to overcome because of my need to return to work quickly so we can afford to pay our mortgage. Our families need this, it is best for moms, dads, and kids.

Erica, Seattle

As a Family Nurse Practitioner and a first time mother due in October, I know how important family medical leave is. I urge you to support and co-sponsor the FAMILY Act! Thank you!

Jennifer, Washington

I am the mother of a 5-year-old daughter. When she was 20 months old, I was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 33. Our families lived 3,000 miles away. If my husband didn't have paid leave, I'm not sure how I would have been able to take care of myself let alone my toddler.

Suzanne, Federal Way

As a human resource professional, I witnessed the effects of negative impact unpaid leave causes new moms. If we can get this new law passed, the US workforce would improve tremendously, as well as the mental well-being of our families and children.

Ada, Seattle

I am a new mother who took FMLA this weekend past year to care for my newborn daughter- it was completely unpaid, and immensely stressful and financially precarious. American families, of all kinds, deserve better. The lack of family leave in the US is shameful.

Julie, Coupeville

Four years later, I am still working to pay off debt accrued during the birth of my first child. Now two months away from the birth of my second child, I know that any change will be too late to benefit me, though it would be a HUGE improvement for others.