

WISCONSIN 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 Wisconsin and take them to heart. Our families are counting on you.**

Toias, Stevens Point

My daughter was born in May 2011. My wife and I are both educators. We do not get paid during the summer months and so it was easy to focus on our newborn over the summer. However, paid family leave provided our family both flexibility and opportunity to spend important time with our daughter during the first year of her life. As a father, I decided to use family leave in order to stay home with my daughter. Instead of having to send her to a daycare at age 4 months, I stayed home with her during the fall semester. It was an especially valuable experience, because paid family leave allowed me to expose

my daughter to German. Since I am from Germany originally, I had always dreamed of sharing my linguistic and cultural roots with my daughter, something that would have been so much more difficult had I not had this initial time with her. I am happy to say that my daughter, now five years old, is fully bilingual. My wife and I also believe that our daughter was far less sick, because she was able to stay home longer. We did not have to send her to daycare until she was almost 2 years old. I cannot stress enough how important paid family leave was to the strong bond between father and daughter that my daughter and I share!

Leslie, Fort Atkinson

I have psoriatic arthritis. I was diagnosed 2 years ago but that was not the start of my chronic illness. I had always had a tendency to get sick easy. I was diagnosed with degenerative joint disease when I was 34. At 39, I had lateral releases done to both knees for chondromalacia. At age 41, I had my left knee replaced. At age 42, I was diagnosed with Sjogren's Syndrome. The past 4 years have been really difficult. I had to take a 8 week medical leave to get a handle on my symptoms. I was on some medication that were causing more harm than help. I am on an expensive medication called Cosentyx. I have needed to use FMLA through my employer. I love my job but my job needs me there. I did not know how to navigate the FMLA system at first. My boss didn't understand its' use as well. I can't switch jobs as I won't be able to not need to take a day off because I am sick. Not every company provides FMLA coverage. My family depends on my income. Thank you.



**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