

# America's Future Needs Paid Family Leave

## Paid Family Leave Fact Sheet



**ZERO TO THREE**  
Early connections last a lifetime

**America's future needs paid family leave.** The time right after a baby is born or adopted is a time of extraordinary growth, development, and connection for a family. These early days and weeks are a time for parents to attend not only to physical needs – immunizations, breastfeeding and nutrition, and adjusting to a new schedule – but to build the crucial relationships that will help their baby thrive. Babies' earliest relationships literally shape the architecture of their developing brains, forming the foundation for their futures.<sup>1</sup> Positive, consistent relationships during babies' earliest days result in individuals who are better equipped for success in school and life—paving the way for bigger returns down the road, including a higher-quality workforce and strong economic growth.<sup>2</sup> These relationships may seem basic, but they require care, consistency, and above all, time.

While the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 provides important protections that have improved conditions for many families, millions of American workers are not covered or cannot afford to take the unpaid leave it provides.<sup>3</sup> Further, the majority of working parents do not have access to paid family leave through their employers<sup>4</sup>, leaving them to choose between their economic security and the crucial time they need to bond with their baby. If we want to help working families and boost our country's economic stability, Congress and the Administration must commit to creating a national paid family and medical leave program that ensures all babies have the opportunity to develop the strong relationships that are fundamental to a successful future.

## Policy Recommendation

### Create a national paid family and medical leave program

While some states and localities have taken the lead in adopting paid family leave policies, the time parents and babies have to bond should not be dependent on income, workplace, zip code, or gender. The Administration and Congress should create a comprehensive national paid family and medical leave insurance program, such as the [Family and Medical Insurance Leave \(FAMILY\) Act](#) currently proposed in Congress, that embodies the following core principles:

- Accessibility for all working people;
- A meaningful length of leave—at least 12 weeks;
- Coverage for the full range of medical and family caregiving needs established in the Family and Medical Leave Act;
- Affordability and cost-effectiveness for workers, employers, and the government;
- Inclusivity when it comes to defining “family”; and
- Protections from adverse employment consequences for workers who need to take leave.<sup>5</sup>

## Research

### A period of paid leave after the birth of a child contributes to the healthy development of infants and toddlers.

- A child's first relationships lay the foundation upon which future learning and relationships are built. Positive, consistent relationships during this period yield confident individuals who are better equipped for success in school and in life.<sup>6</sup> Increased time off from work gives parents and children the time that is necessary to make these connections, and their ability to do so sets the course for all future development.
- Paid family leave yields higher rates and longer periods of breastfeeding,<sup>7</sup> which reduces the rates of childhood infections and decreases maternal stress.<sup>8</sup>

## QUICK FACTS

- ❖ Only half of all first-time mothers take paid family leave in connection with childbirth.<sup>i</sup>
- ❖ A 10-week extension in paid leave reduced the death rate in infants from one to 12 months old by 6%.<sup>ii</sup>
- ❖ Fathers who take two or more weeks off after the birth of a child are more involved in that infant's care than fathers who take no leave.<sup>iii</sup>
- ❖ Children whose families have paid family leave have higher rates of immunizations and participation in well-child check-ups.<sup>iv</sup>
- ❖ Employers who have been affected by California's paid family leave requirements reported that the program had a neutral or positive effect on business.<sup>v</sup>

- Dedicated time at home with newborns, infants, and toddlers gives parents time to attend well-child medical visits and ensure that their children receive all necessary immunizations.<sup>9</sup> These practices lower infant mortality and reduce the occurrence and length of childhood illnesses, which in turn reduce private and public health expenditures.<sup>10</sup>
- Time for parents to provide care facilitates the early detection of potential developmental delays at a time when problems can be most effectively addressed.<sup>11</sup>

### Paid leave improves outcomes for the entire family, including parents and caregivers.

- Paid family leave is also associated with health benefits for new mothers, including declines in depressive symptoms and improvement in overall health.<sup>12</sup>
- Families in Rhode Island who benefitted from a state paid family leave program were much more likely to report better health, lower stress, and a higher satisfaction in their ability to care for their new children and arrange child care.<sup>13</sup>
- Preliminary research from California suggests that paid leave may also help prevent child maltreatment, perhaps by reducing risk factors such as parental stress and depression.<sup>14</sup>

### Paid leave policies can benefit employers, taxpayers, and the economy, now and in the future

- After instituting paid family leave in California, companies and organizations overwhelmingly reported that the policy had a neutral or positive effect on their businesses.<sup>15</sup>
- As workers have support in growing their families, they develop loyalty to their employers. Furthermore, they get the early care for their children that can prevent issues like infant mortality and longer term illnesses that pull them away from work.
- Positive, consistent relationships during a child's early years yield confident individuals who are better equipped for success in school and life<sup>14</sup>, paving the way for a higher quality workforce and strong economic growth.

<sup>1</sup> National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2007). *The timing and quality of early experiences combine to shape brain architecture: Working Paper No. 5*. Harvard University. Retrieved from [www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu)

<sup>2</sup> Phillips, D. A., & Shonkoff, J. P. (Eds.). (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. National Academies Press.

<sup>3</sup> Klerman, J., Daley, K., & Pozniak, A. (2012). *Family and medical leave in 2012: Technical Report*. U.S. Department of Labor. Retrieved from [www.dol.gov/whd/fmla/survey](http://www.dol.gov/whd/fmla/survey)

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2012). *Employee benefits in the United States National Compensation Survey: Employee benefits in the United States, March 2012 (Table 32)*. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2012/ebb10050.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> ZERO TO THREE & National Partnership for Women and Families. (2016). *The child development case for a national paid family and medical leave program*. ZERO TO THREE. Retrieved from <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/204-the-child-development-case-for-a-national-paid-family-and-medical-leave-program>

<sup>6</sup> Phillips, D. A., & Shonkoff, J. P. (2000).

<sup>7</sup> Kamerman, S.B. (2006).

<sup>8</sup> Zigler, E., Muenchow, S., & Ruhm, C. J. (2012). *Time off with baby: The case for paid care leave*. ZERO TO THREE.

<sup>9</sup> Kamerman, S.B. (2006). *Parental leave policies: The impact on child well-being*. In Peter Moss and Margaret O'Brien, Eds., *International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research 2006*, Department of Trade and Industry, 16–21. Retrieved from [http://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/Leavenetwork/Annual\\_reviews/2006\\_annual\\_report.pdf](http://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/Leavenetwork/Annual_reviews/2006_annual_report.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> National Partnership for Women and Families. (2015). *Children benefit when parents have access to paid leave*. NPWF. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/paid-leave/children-benefit-when-parents.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Zigler, E., Muenchow, S., & Ruhm, C. J. (2012).

<sup>12</sup> Chatterji, P. & Markowitz, S. (2008). *Family leave after childbirth and the health of new mothers*. National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/papers/w14156>

<sup>13</sup> Silver, B., Mederer, H., & Djurdjevic, E. (2015). *Launching the Rhode Island Temporary Caregiver Insurance Program (TCI): Employee experiences one year later*. Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training and University of Rhode Island. Retrieved from <http://www.dlt.ri.gov/TDI/pdf/RIPaidLeave2015DOL.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Klevens, J., Luo, F., Xu, L., Peterson, C. & Latzman, N.E. *Paid family leave's effect on hospital admissions for pediatric abusive head trauma*. *Injury Prevention*. 2016. Retrieved from <http://injuryprevention.bmj.com/content/early/2016/01/05/injuryprev-2015-041702>

<sup>15</sup> Appelbaum, E., & Milkman, R. (2011). *Leaves that pay: Employer and worker experiences with paid family leave in California*. Center for Economic and Policy Research Publication. Retrieved from <http://www.cepr.net/index.php/publications/reports/leaves-that-pay>

<sup>14</sup> Appelbaum, E., & Milkman, R. (2011).

### Quick Facts

<sup>i</sup> Laughlin, L. (2011). *Maternity leave and employment patterns of first-time mothers: 1961 — 2008*. U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p70-128.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Shim, J. (2016). Family leave policy and child mortality: Evidence from 19 OECD countries. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 25, 215-221.

<sup>iii</sup> Study included fathers in two-parent, opposite sex families. Nepomnyaschy, L. & Waldfogel, J. (2007). Paternity leave and fathers' involvement with their young children: Evidence from the American ECLS–B. *Community, Work and Family*, 10(4), 427–453.

<sup>iv</sup> Kamerman, S. (2006).

<sup>v</sup> Appelbaum, E., & Milkman, R. (2011).