



Paid Family Leave Talking Points

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America's Future Needs Paid Family Leave

- The time after the birth or adoption of a baby is an essential time of development for babies and families. Because early relationships nurture early brain connections that form the foundation for all learning and relationships that follow, parents and caregivers are on the front line of preparing our future workers, innovators, and citizens.
- Most working parents do not have access to paid family leave. Many parents must make the impossible choice between unhurried time to bond with their babies and losing their jobs or economic security.
- Now is the time for policymakers to secure the best beginnings for children and the best future for our country by supporting a comprehensive paid family and medical leave program.

Paid Leave Supports Babies' Development

- A baby's beginning lays the foundation for all to come. For babies, every minute and every interaction is a lesson in how the world works, how they are valued, and how people relate to one another. Caring, consistent relationships experienced by young children help establish a child's ability to learn, to form positive relationships, to exercise self-control, and to mitigate stress.
- Time to care means more secure, confident babies who are ready to learn. Security is an essential building block for social and emotional health and learning. Babies are driven by their needs. Adults learn a baby's cues through focused attention and response over time, thereby offering a sense of security. Paid time to care gives families crucial time to foster these connections.
- Having time to care for their babies helps parents catch developmental problems early. This is especially important for caregivers of infants who are considered at high risk, such as babies born preterm or at low birth weights and those who have illnesses or identified disabilities.

- Good things happen for babies when fathers take leave. Studies of two-parent, opposite-sex households show a number of positive outcomes:
 - Fathers who take two or more weeks off after the birth of a child are more involved in that child's direct care nine months after birth than fathers who take no leave.
 - Involved fathers also promote children's educational attainment and emotional stability.
 - And, a father's involvement in a newborn's care in the first six months can mean both mother and baby sleep better.

Paid Leave Supports Babies' Health

- Parents stay up to date with preventive care. Time at home with babies gives parents the time they need to attend well-child medical visits and ensure that their children receive all necessary immunizations.
- Breastfeeding is made easier—which saves lives and money. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a baby's life, but breastfeeding can be challenging for mothers and babies. Paid family leave offers unrushed time that allows mothers and babies the opportunity to learn and practice the skill. In fact, the U.S. Surgeon General has recommended that paid leave be offered to all working mothers in order to promote breastfeeding.
 - Studies show that paid leave yields higher rates and longer periods of breastfeeding, which reduces the rates of childhood infections.
 - For low-income families in New Jersey, where a statewide paid family leave program has been in effect since 2009, researchers found that new mothers who use the state paid leave program breastfeed, on average, one month longer than new mothers who do not use the program.
 - If 90% of women in the United States breastfed their babies for the first 6 months of life, it would save 900 babies and \$13 billion in healthcare expenses annually.
- Time with parents can be a matter of survival. After reviewing family leave policies in 19 countries, researchers found that a 10-week extension in paid leave was predicted to decrease overall infant mortality by 2% and post-neonatal (28 days to 1 year) infant mortality by 6%.

Paid Leave Supports Outcomes for the Entire Family

- Moms are healthier. Longer leave periods are associated with health benefits for new mothers, including declines in depressive symptoms, a reduction in the likelihood of severe depression, and improvement in overall health. Children's development is greatly affected by their parents' mental health and general wellbeing.
- Families are less stressed about their ability to provide care. Parents who use California's paid leave program, in effect since 2004, report that leave has a positive effect on their ability to care for their new children. Similarly, in Rhode Island, which implemented a paid leave program in 2014, parents who use the state program are much more likely to report better health, lower stress, and a higher satisfaction with their ability to care for their new children compared to parents who do not use the program.
- Promising preliminary data suggests babies are safer. Preliminary research in California suggests that paid leave may also help prevent child maltreatment, perhaps by reducing risk factors such as parental stress and depression.

Paid Leave Policies Support Employers, Taxpayers, and the Current and Future Economy

- Good beginnings mean reduced expenditures and more time at work. When parents can attend to a child's early medical needs, infant mortality and the occurrence and length of childhood illnesses are reduced, which in turn lowers private and public health expenditures, as well as the need for working parents to take time away from work.
- Time to arrange care means greater productivity at work. Paid leave can give parents and other caregivers time to search for quality child care that meets the unique needs of their families, thereby facilitating greater productivity when they return to their jobs after leave.
- Our future workforce is well-nurtured and better equipped. Positive, consistent relationships during a child's early years yield confident individuals who are better equipped for success in school and in life, paving the way for a higher quality workforce and strong economic growth.

Without Paid Family Leave, Families Do Not Have the Supports They Need

- Too often, out of economic necessity, new parents are forced to go back to work and forego precious bonding time with their children.
- Most employed women do not have access to paid maternity leave. Of private sector workers, only 35% are employed at worksites that offer paid maternity leave to most female employees, and only 22% are employed at worksites that offer paid maternity leave to all female employees.
- Most employed men do not have access to paid paternity leave. Of private sector workers, 11% are employed at worksites that offer paid leave to most male employees, and 9% are at worksites that offer paid leave to all male employees.
- Among employers voluntarily offering paid leave for new mothers, just 9% provided fully paid leave in 2014, a decline from 16% in 2008.

Policy Recommendations

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.