

# Paid Leave Means A Stronger Colorado

FEBRUARY 2024

**Colorado is home to the tenth state paid family and medical leave program in the United States.** Colorado's program, the first to be enacted through a ballot initiative, took full effect in 2024. The program builds on lessons learned from older state programs to be one of the most progressive in the nation, including job protection, a progressive wage replacement rate and an inclusive definition of "family" for family caregiving. <sup>1</sup>

**Coloradans are caught between their work and family responsibilities. Paid leave means not having to choose between job and family.**

People in  
Colorado both  
work and provide  
care

- ▶ About 62,300 children are born in Colorado each year, and in 72 percent of all Colorado households with children – nearly 837,000 homes – all parents have paying jobs.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ Women's wages support their households. In Colorado, 62 percent of Black mothers, 46 percent of white mothers, 49 percent of Latina mothers and 41 of AAPI mothers are key family breadwinners. State-level data is limited, but nationally 64 percent of Native American mothers are breadwinners.<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ Women make up nearly half of Colorado's labor force (46 percent) and more than one-quarter of its business owners (29 percent).<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ Across the country, many men want to play a larger role in caring for their children, but unsupportive policies and stigma hold them back.<sup>5</sup>

**Colorado families' care needs are increasing. Paid leave means older adults and people with disabilities can provide and receive care, and our care workforce is more resilient.**

- ▶ More than one-fifth of Colorado workers are 55 and older,<sup>6</sup> and in the next 20 years, the state's population age 65 and older will grow by 350,000.<sup>7</sup>
- ▶ Nationwide, nearly one third of all adults — and 41 percent of older Black women and 43 percent of older Latinas — aged 55-64 hold a physically demanding job,<sup>8</sup> which may exacerbate or cause serious medical conditions that require care, particularly in older workers and workers with disabilities.<sup>9</sup> In Colorado, that would mean 158,600 older workers, 2,900 older Black women workers and 12,600 older Latina workers.<sup>10</sup>

The state's  
caregiving  
needs are  
growing

- ▶ Paid leave reduces nursing home utilization and can help recruitment and retention of care workers.<sup>11</sup>
- ▶ An estimated 647,000 Coloradans report having long-term COVID-19 symptoms that affect their daily activities.<sup>12</sup> Paid leave is a critical support as we continue through this mass disabling event, which disproportionately impacts women, people of color and workers with low incomes.<sup>13</sup>
- ▶ Paid leave helps family caregivers and people with disabilities (who are often caregivers themselves) manage their health and care needs while maintaining their income and employment.<sup>14</sup>

**State paid leave plans like Colorado’s show workers, families and businesses benefit from paid leave. Paid leave means people – especially women – aren’t forced to leave the labor force to care for their families or health, reducing turnover for employers of all sizes and boosting the economy.**

**Colorado’s  
paid leave  
program  
strengthens the  
state**

- ▶ Paid leave helps improve health outcomes and helps working people remain economically secure and stay connected to their jobs.<sup>15</sup>
- ▶ Businesses’ employee retention can also improve significantly with paid leave, helping to strengthen bottom lines.<sup>16</sup>
- ▶ State programs are used as intended by workers without overburdening employers.<sup>17</sup>

**Colorado’s paid leave plan shows that paid leave programs work – a common sense, tested approach that works for families, businesses and economies. But people’s access to paid leave shouldn’t depend on where they live or work or what job they hold. The United States needs a common sense, national paid leave program that:**

- ▶ includes all workers, no matter where they live or work or what kind of job they have;
- ▶ replaces enough income that workers at any income level can afford leave;
- ▶ provides enough time and covers the range of major needs workers face including addressing their own health conditions, caring for seriously ill, injured or disabled family members and welcoming newborn, newly adopted or foster children;
- ▶ provides education and outreach to ease implementation for workers and small businesses;
- ▶ has a sustainable funding source that is affordable for workers, employers and the government without harming other essential programs.

**A national  
paid leave  
plan is the  
solution**

**National paid family and medical leave means a stronger economy, healthier families and businesses, and greater equality for all women and families.**

**To learn more, visit [NationalPartnership.org/PaidLeave](https://NationalPartnership.org/PaidLeave).**

- 
- 1 National Partnership for Women & Families. (2023, October). *State Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Laws*. Retrieved 12 January 2024, from <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-leave/state-paid-family-leave-laws.pdf>
- 2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, June). *National Vital Statistics Rapid Release, Births: Provisional Data for 2022 (Table 4. Total number of births, by state of residence, provisional 2022, and percentage of cesarean delivery and preterm births, by state of residence: United States, each state and territory, final 2021 and provisional 2022)*. Retrieved 12 January 2024, from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsrr/vsrr028.pdf>; U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2022, Geographies: All States within United States and Puerto Rico (Table DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics)*. Retrieved 12 January 2024, from <https://data.census.gov>
- 3 Shaw, E., Mason, C. N., Lacarte, V., & Jauregui, E. (2020, May). *Holding Up Half the Sky: Mothers as Workers, Primary Caregivers, & Breadwinners During COVID-19*. Retrieved 12 January 2024, from Institute for Women's Policy Research website: <http://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Holding-Up-Half-the-Sky-Mothers-as-Breadwinners.pdf>; "Key breadwinner" means a single mother who heads a household or a married mother who contributes 40 percent or more of the couple's joint earnings. Nationally, 79 percent of Black mothers are key breadwinners; 64 percent of Native American mothers are key breadwinners; 60 percent of mothers identifying as multiracial or "other" race are key breadwinners; 49 percent of Latina mothers are key breadwinners; 48 percent of white mothers are key breadwinners; and 43 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander mothers are key breadwinners.
- 4 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023). *Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Expanded State Employment Status Demographic Data (2022 Annual Averages)*. Retrieved 12 January 2024, from <https://www.bls.gov/lau/ex14tables.htm>; Institute for Women's Policy Research. (2021). *Status of Women in the States (Table 4.1)*. Retrieved 12 January 2024 from <https://statusofwomendata.org/explore-the-data/poverty-opportunity/additional-state-data/composite/>
- 5 Lenhart, A., Swenson, H., & Schulte, B. (2019, December). *Lifting the Barriers to Paid Family and Medical Leave for Men in the United States*. Retrieved 12 January 2024 from New America website: <https://www.newamerica.org/better-life-lab/reports/lifting-barriers-paid-family-and-medical-leave-men-united-states/>; Livingston, G. (2018, January 8). *Most dads say they spend too little time with their children; about a quarter live apart from them*. Pew Research Center Publication. Retrieved 12 January 2024, from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/08/most-dads-say-they-spend-too-little-time-with-their-children-about-a-quarter-live-apart-from-them/>
- 6 See note 4, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- 7 See note 4, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; University of Virginia Demographics Research Group. (2018). *National Population Projections: Projections for the 50 States and D.C. (Age and Sex)*. Retrieved 12 January 2024, from <http://demographics.coopercenter.org/national-population-projections/?q=demographics/national-population-projections>
- 8 National Academy of Social Insurance. (2023, September). *Older Workers in Physically Challenging Jobs Need Stronger Social Insurance Supports*. Retrieved 12 January 2024, from: <https://www.nasi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/OlderWorkersTaskForce-Report-FINAL.pdf>
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 See note 4, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; National Partnership analysis of 2018–2022 American Community Survey accessed via IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org). Number of Black, non-Hispanic women and Hispanic/Latina women in the state's labor force who are aged 55 to 64. We use a five-year dataset to have a sufficient sample size to analyze state-level data; due to pandemic-related labor force impacts in 2020 and 2021, this is a conservative estimate and we expect the population of older women workers to be higher in future years.
- 11 Arora, K., & Wolf, D. A. (2017, November.) Does Paid Family Leave Reduce Nursing Home Use? The California Experience. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 37(1), 38-62; Espinoza, R. (2020). *Would You Stay? Rethinking Direct Care Job Quality*. Retrieved 12 January 2024, from PHI National website: <https://www.phinational.org/caringforthefuture/wouldyoustay/>
- 12 U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). *Week 63 Household Pulse Survey: October 18 - 30 (Long COVID-19 Symptoms: Adults who previously had COVID-19, with symptoms lasting 3 months or longer)*. Retrieved 12 January 2024, from <https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/hhp/#/?>
- 13 Ives-Ruble, M. & Neal, A. (2023, October 26). *The Recent COVID-Fueled Rise in Disability Calls for Better Worker Protections*. Retrieved 12 January 2024, from Center for American Progress website: <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-recent-covid-fueled-rise-in-disability-calls-for-better-worker-protections/>
- 14 Setty, S., Koball, H., Hartig, S., & Sutcliffe, T. J. (2019, February). *Disability Perspectives on Paid Leave: A Qualitative Analysis of Leave-taking Among Workers Affected by Disabilities or Serious Health Conditions*. Retrieved 12 January 2024, from The Arc of the U.S. website: <https://thearc.org/policy-advocacy/paid-family-medical-leave/>
- 15 National Partnership for Women & Families. (2023, November). *Paid Leave Works: Evidence from State Programs*. Retrieved 12 January 2024, from <https://nationalpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/paid-leave-works-evidence-from-state-programs.pdf>
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid.

The National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, reproductive health and rights, access to quality, affordable health care and policies that help all people meet the dual demands of work and

---

family. More information is available at [NationalPartnership.org](https://NationalPartnership.org).

© 2024 National Partnership for Women & Families. All rights reserved.