Paid Leave Means A Stronger Illinois

JANUARY 2019

The vast majority of working people in the United States do not have paid family leave through their jobs. In Illinois, even unpaid leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act is inaccessible for 60 percent of working people. This means Illinoisans face impossible choices when new children are born or adopted and when serious personal or family health needs inevitably arise.

Illinoisans are caught between their work and family responsibilities.

- In 71 percent of all Illinois households with children – nearly two million homes – all parents have paying jobs.
- Women’s wages support their households. In Illinois, 84 percent of Black mothers, 49 percent of Latina mothers and 48 percent of white mothers are key family breadwinners.
- Women make up nearly half of Illinois’ labor force (48 percent) and nearly one-third of its business owners (31 percent).
- Across the country, many men want to play a larger role in caring for their children, but unsupportive policies and stigma hold them back.

Paid leave means not having to choose between job and family.

Illinois families will face increased family and medical care needs.

- Nearly one in four workers is age 55 and older.
- In less than 15 years, the share of the state’s population age 65 and older will grow by one-third.
- Older workers are more likely to experience serious medical conditions that require care.
- Eight people die every day from drug overdoses in Illinois.

Paid leave means older adults and working people of all ages can get the support they need to receive and provide critical care.

The state’s caregiving needs are significant, and growing
Impossible choices between job and family are hurting the economy, and women suffer most.

- In Illinois, there is a 10-percentage point gap in labor force participation between men and women, in part because the United States lacks family friendly policies.\(^\text{12}\)
- Nationally, if women participated in the U.S. labor force at the same rates as women in countries with paid leave, our economy would benefit from more than $500 billion in additional economic activity each year.\(^\text{13}\)

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 and boosting the economy.

Illinoisans need a real policy solution to address the country’s paid leave crisis.

A true paid leave policy would:

- Be cost-effective for workers, employers and the government;
- Cover all working people, apply equally to men and women and reflect a modern definition of family;
- Include the well-established reasons people need family and medical leave;
- Provide at least 12 weeks of leave and replace a substantial share of workers’ usual wages; and
- Protect workers against adverse consequences for taking leave.

The Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act is the only federal proposal that aligns with these criteria. And the sustainable national fund it would create would reduce the number of working families in Illinois facing significant economic insecurity when they need to take family and medical leave by 83 percent.\(^\text{14}\)

The FAMILY Act means a stronger economy, healthier families and businesses, greater equity regardless of a person’s job and more workplace equality for women.

For more on the FAMILY Act, visit NationalPartnership.org/theFAMILYAct.
The National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, access to quality health care and policies that help women and men meet the dual demands of work and family. More information is available at NationalPartnership.org.

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