

Work-Family Policies Must Include Grandparents

FACT SHEET

Grandparents are the glue that holds many families together—yet our workplace laws don't honor their critical role.

Grandparents play a more vital role than ever in building strong families and caring for our nation's children. In addition to providing emotional and financial support, millions of grandparents act as primary caregivers for their grandchildren — a number that has increased since the start of the recession. And millions of younger workers care for aging or ill grandparents. Grandparents and grandchildren need workplace policies that help them meet their work and family responsibilities without jeopardizing their economic security or job stability.

Grandparents are both family caregivers and care recipients in millions of U.S. families.

- Grandparents play a key role in the care of our nation's children. Almost 4 in 10 grandparents report caring for a grandchild in the past 12 months.¹ An estimated 6.4 million Americans live with their grandchildren, and more than half of these grandparents are in the labor force.²
- The number of children being raised primarily by their grandparents has risen significantly, particularly since the start of the recession. In just one year (from 2007 to 2008), the number of children being raised by a grandparent increased 6 percent to 2.9 million children; the number of grandparents who are their grandchildren's primary caretakers increased 5 percent, to 2.6 million.³
- Grandparents also need and receive care from family members. Nearly one in ten unpaid family caregivers in the U.S. is caring for a grandparent or grandparent-in-law.⁴

Public policies fail to recognize the critical role that grandparents and grandchildren play in caregiving.

Neither grandparents who care for grandchildren nor grandchildren who provide care to ailing grandparents have the right to job-protected leave under our federal laws. That means workers can be fired for taking time away from work to care for a seriously ill grandparent or grandchild. The Department of Labor recently released an interpretation that will expand protections under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to some grandparents who fulfill parental duties, but this is only a first step.⁵

Take action to honor our nation's grandparents: fight for workplace policies that will strengthen their economic security.

- **Expand the FMLA.** The Family and Medical Leave Inclusion Act, H.R. 2132/S. 3680, would expand the FMLA to allow workers unpaid, job-protected leave to care for a grandparent, same-sex spouse, domestic partner, parent-in-law, adult child, or sibling with a serious health condition.

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- **Provide paid family leave.** The Family Leave Insurance Act, H.R. 1723, would create a national Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program that provides paid leave to all covered workers to care for a seriously ill family member, including a sick grandparent or grandchild.
 - **Provide paid sick days.** The Healthy Families Act, H.R. 2460/S. 1152 would allow most workers to earn up to 7 paid sick days a year to recover from their own illness, attend medical appointments, or care for a sick family member—including a grandparent or grandchild.
 - **Strengthen state work-family laws.** States across the country are working to promote family economic security through paid family leave, paid sick days, and FMLA expansion. Many of these efforts include grandparents and grandchildren. For example, Pennsylvania is seeking to join Hawaii and Oregon in expanding FMLA leave to cover grandparents and grandchildren. Pennsylvania H.B. 2278 would allow workers to take unpaid, job-protected leave to care for grandparents and grandchildren, as well as siblings. Maryland and other states have recently considered similar legislation.

¹ Pew Research Center, *Since the Start of the Recession, More Children Raised by Grandparents*, 2010 (4). <http://pewsocialtrends.org/assets/pdf/764-children-raised-by-grandparents.pdf>.

² 2008 American Community Survey Detailed Table: "Employment status of grandparents living with own grandchildren under 18 years by responsibility for own grandchildren and age of grandparent." U.S. Census Bureau, *American Fact Finder*. http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=01000US&-ds_name=ACS_2008_1YR_G00_&-SubjectID=17632473&-lang=en&-mt_name=ACS_2008_1YR_G2000_B10058&-format=&-CONTEXT=dt.

³ See note 1 (1-2).

⁴ National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP, *Caregiving in the U.S. 2009*, 2009 (18). http://www.caregiving.org/data/Caregiving_in_the_US_2009_full_report.pdf.

⁵ See U.S. Department of Labor, *Administrator's Interpretation No. 2010-3*, June 22, 2010. http://www.dol.gov/whd/opinion/adminIntrprtn/FMLA/2010/FMLAAI2010_3.pdf.

The National Partnership for Women & Families is a non-profit, non-partisan 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 www.nationalpartnership.org.