

April 20, 2021

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and the tens of millions of working families we represent, we **urge you to co-sponsor and advocate for swift and thorough consideration of the Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act.** The FAMILY Act would create a national family and medical leave insurance program to help ensure that people who work can take the time they need to address serious health and caregiving needs. It would help support working families' economic security, promote racial and gender equity, create a more level playing field for businesses of all sizes and strengthen our economy. The FAMILY Act is the national paid family and medical leave plan voters want and our country needs.

**The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the consequences faced by working people when they lack access to paid leave.** As of November 2020, 4.1 million adults in the United States were not working because they were sick with coronavirus symptoms and 2.6 million because they were caring for an ill or older loved one.<sup>1</sup> And even as the promise of vaccination offers hope that the pandemic will end sometime in 2021, the long-term health and caregiving consequences of COVID-19 are just beginning to surface. The United States had more than 20 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 by late 2020; an estimated 10 to 15 percent – 1.7 to 3.4 million people – will experience persistent or relapsing symptoms, which can interfere with the ability to work or require care from a loved one.<sup>2</sup> As child care centers closed and schools were forced into remote learning, hundreds of thousands of parents, especially women, have been forced to choose between caring for their children and staying in the workforce. As of July 2020, nearly one in three mothers age 25-44, and one in eight fathers of the same age, were not working due to child care issues.<sup>3</sup> Workers in low-paid “frontline” and essential jobs, disproportionately women of color,<sup>4</sup> are doubly impacted, facing higher rates of infection and death in part due to workplace exposure,<sup>5</sup> and typically less likely to have paid leave or the ability to work remotely.<sup>6</sup> Paid leave would provide for working parents and other caregivers, support public health, and bolster American families' economic security as the pandemic rages on.

**The benefits of paid family and medical leave are well documented, yet the vast majority of working people in the United States do not have access to this basic protection.** More than 100 million people – or 79 percent of workers – do not have paid family leave through their jobs, and 60 percent lack access to paid personal medical leave through their employer.<sup>7</sup> Access rates for workers in lower-wage jobs are even lower, and most recent private sector advances have been disproportionately concentrated in higher-skill industries and among higher-paid employees, creating even greater disparities between lower- and higher-paid workers.<sup>8</sup> Even unpaid leave through the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is inaccessible to nearly half of working people because of eligibility restrictions, and many who are eligible cannot afford to take unpaid leave.<sup>9</sup> This means that when serious personal or family health needs inevitably arise, people face impossible choices between their families' well-being, their financial security and their jobs.

**Women of color are especially harmed by the lack of paid leave.** Racial disparities are stark in meaningful access to leave: about 71 percent of Latinx workers, 67 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native workers, 61 percent of Black workers and 54 percent of Asian American and Pacific Islander workers are either not eligible for or cannot afford to take unpaid FMLA leave.<sup>10</sup> And even while women of color are so often key breadwinners for their families,<sup>11</sup> they continue to face punishing wage gaps: Asian American women are typically paid just 87 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men, Black women 63 cents, Native women 60 cents and Latinas just 55 cents.<sup>12</sup> The combination of inequities, including the racial wealth gap, and discrimination also means that families of color may be less able to withstand the financial hardship associated with a serious family or medical event and struggle more to recover their stability afterward.<sup>13</sup>

**The FAMILY Act would create a strong, inclusive national paid family and medical leave insurance program and set a nationwide paid leave baseline.** Employees would earn two-thirds of their wages, up to a cap, for a limited period of time (up to 60 workdays, or 12 workweeks in a year) to address their own serious health issue, including pregnancy or childbirth; to deal with the serious health issue of a family member; to care for a new child; and for certain military caregiving and leave purposes. Employees, employers and self-employed workers would fund both the benefits and the administrative costs of the program by contributing a small amount in each pay period to a self-sustaining fund, administered through a new Office of Paid Family and Medical Leave. Eligibility rules would allow younger, part-time, low-wage and contingent workers to contribute and benefit, regardless of their employer's size or their length of time on the job.

**The FAMILY Act builds on successful state programs.** In fact, nearly all state programs now go beyond the FAMILY Act in several important ways, providing data and lessons that Congress should consider. California has had a paid family and medical leave insurance program in place since 2004, New Jersey since 2009, Rhode Island since 2014, New York since 2018, Washington since January 2020 and the District of Columbia since July 2020. A strong new program will take effect in Massachusetts in 2021. And momentum continues to grow: Connecticut and Oregon passed paid leave laws in 2019, and voters in Colorado passed a paid leave program by ballot initiative in November 2020. Evidence from the existing state programs shows their value and affordability; all are financially sound and self-sustaining, and each state that has paid leave in place has or is exploring ways to make it even more accessible to people who need family leave.<sup>14</sup> Analyses of California's law show that both employers and employees benefit from the program.<sup>15</sup> In New Jersey, the program's costs have been lower than expected and public attitudes toward the program are favorable.<sup>16</sup> Early research on Rhode Island's program found positive effects for new parents, and a majority of small- and medium-sized employers were in favor of the program one year after it took effect.<sup>17</sup> Paid leave programs also helped states quickly address health and caregiving needs in the early stages of the pandemic.<sup>18</sup>

**The FAMILY Act would address the range of care needs people face, including the growing need to provide elder care.** Changing demographics mean more adults will need elder care and the number of potential family caregivers is shrinking: For every person age 80 and older, the number of potential family caregivers will fall from about seven in 2010 to four by 2030, and then to less than three by 2050.<sup>19</sup> It is also important to note that about three-quarters of people who take family or medical leave each year do so for reasons other than

maternity or paternity care. They take leave to care for family members with serious illnesses, injuries or disabilities or for their own serious health issue.<sup>20</sup> The majority of parents, adult children and spouses who provide care for ill family members or family members with disabilities also have paying jobs, and on average work more than 30 hours per week while also managing their caregiving responsibilities.<sup>21</sup> The majority of military caregivers – and more than three-quarters of caregivers for post-9/11 wounded warriors – are also in the labor force.<sup>22</sup>

**The FAMILY Act would support improved health outcomes and could lower health care costs.** New mothers who take paid leave are more likely to take the amount of time away from work recommended by doctors,<sup>23</sup> and their children are more likely to be breastfed, receive medical check-ups and get critical immunizations.<sup>24</sup> When children are seriously ill, the presence of a parent shortens a child’s hospital stay by 31 percent;<sup>25</sup> active parental involvement in a child’s hospital care may head off future health problems, especially for children with chronic health conditions,<sup>26</sup> and thus reduce costs. Paid leave also lets people support older family members with serious health conditions, helping them fulfill treatment plans, manage their care, and avoid complications and hospital readmissions.<sup>27</sup> Early research has found that California’s paid leave program reduced nursing home utilization.<sup>28</sup> And, for the millions of families in communities that are struggling with opioid and other substance use disorders, paid leave supports family caregivers, who play a key role in care and recovery by helping loved ones with health care arrangements and treatment.<sup>29</sup>

**The FAMILY Act also would strengthen large and small businesses and support entrepreneurs.** Paid leave reduces turnover costs – typically about one-fifth of an employee’s salary<sup>30</sup> – and increases employee loyalty. In California, nine out of 10 businesses surveyed reported positive effects or no impacts on profitability and productivity after the state’s paid leave program went into effect.<sup>31</sup> Small businesses reported even more positive or neutral outcomes than larger businesses.<sup>32</sup> Small business owners from across the nation expect that the FAMILY Act model would help level the playing field with large corporations, improve worker retention, productivity and morale, and help protect their economic security if an accident or medical emergency occurs.<sup>33</sup> This is part of the reason that 70 percent of small businesses surveyed nationwide support the FAMILY Act approach of shared payroll deductions.<sup>34</sup> By including self-employed people, the FAMILY Act would also help entrepreneurs balance the risks of starting a new business with the need to ensure their families’ health and security.

**National paid family and medical leave has broad support from voters across party lines.** Nearly eight in ten 2020 voters support a permanent paid family and medical leave policy, including 67 percent of Republicans, 77 percent of independents and 93 percent of Democrats.<sup>35</sup> In a survey about voters’ preferences for a national paid leave program, participants ranked the FAMILY Act model as their top choice, across party lines. And when asked how much they would be willing to contribute toward a paid leave fund, seven in 10 voters said they would be willing to contribute one percent of their wages, or one cent for every dollar earned, which is more than the FAMILY Act is projected to cost.<sup>36</sup> Additional qualitative research shows voters prefer a national plan that covers all family relationships and includes employment protections.<sup>37</sup>

**Working families need a nationwide paid family and medical leave standard that is comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable.**

**The FAMILY Act is the only national paid family and medical leave proposal that reflects what most people in the United States need.** We urge you to co-sponsor this essential legislation today, to push for swift and thorough consideration that surfaces the best practices and lessons learned from state policies, and to reject inadequate proposals that would fail to meet the needs of the nation's workforce, families or businesses – and that would do more harm than good.

Sincerely,

**National**

1,000 Days

Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors

ADAP Advocacy Association

All Our Kin

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

American Civil Liberties Union

American Psychiatric Association, Women's Caucus

American Public Health Association

American Society on Aging

Association of Flight Attendants-CWA

Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)

Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses

Autistic Self Advocacy Network

Autism Society of America

Baby Cafe USA

Bread for the World

Breastfeeding Family Friendly Communities

Caring Across Generations

Catholics for Choice

Center for Economic and Policy Research

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Child Care Aware® of America

Church World Service

Coalition on Human Needs

Community Access National Network (CANN)

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces

Demos

Family Equality

Family Values @ Work

First Focus Campaign for Children

Forum for Youth Investment

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Futures Without Violence

HealthConnect One

HEAR US Inc.

Hispanic Federation  
ICNA Council for Social Justice  
Justice for Migrant Women  
Lactation Education Resources  
La Leche League USA  
Legal Momentum, The Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund  
Main Street Alliance  
March of Dimes  
Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)  
NAACP  
NARAL Pro-Choice America  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
National Association for Rural Mental Health (NARMH)  
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities  
National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Coalition for the Homeless  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Education Association  
National Employment Law Project  
National Employment Lawyers Association  
National Health Law Program  
National Multiple Sclerosis Society  
National Network of Abortion Funds  
National Network to End Domestic Violence  
National Organization for Women  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Rural Social Work Caucus  
National WIC Association  
National Women's Law Center  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
Paid Leave for All  
Parents as Teachers  
Partnership for America's Children  
People For the American Way  
PL+US: Paid Leave for the United States  
Progressive Democrats of America  
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice  
RESULTS  
Service Employees International Union  
Shriver Center on Poverty Law  
SisterSong: National Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective  
SPLC Action Fund  
Start Early  
The Coalition of Labor Union Women

The Gerontological Society of America  
The National Domestic Violence Hotline  
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society  
TIME'S UP Now  
Union for Reform Judaism  
United Church of Christ; Justice and Witness Ministries  
United for Respect  
U.S. Breastfeeding Committee  
U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce  
Voices for Progress  
We All Rise  
Women of Reform Judaism  
Women's Media Center  
YWCA USA  
ZERO TO THREE

### **Alabama**

AIDS Alabama  
Alabama Breastfeeding Committee  
Greater Birmingham Chapter of the National Organization of Women

### **Arizona**

Poder Latinx Arizona  
United Food and Commercial Workers Local 99

### **Arkansas**

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

### **California**

All-Options  
AnitaB.org  
Association of California Caregiver Resource Centers  
Breastfeed L.A.  
California Breastfeeding Coalition  
California Child Care Resource & Referral Network  
California National Organization for Women  
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence  
California Work & Family Coalition  
Child Care Law Center  
Consumer Action  
Contra Costa NOW  
Disability Rights Legal Center  
Food Empowerment Project  
Friends Committee on Legislation of California  
Helpr  
Human Impact Partners  
Jewish Center for Justice  
Legal Aid at Work  
Los Angeles Valley College

Mutual Housing California  
National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter  
National Council of Jewish Women LA  
Orange County Equity Coalition  
Public Counsel  
Restaurant Opportunities Center of the Bay  
San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program, Inc.  
SaverLife  
Teen Success, Inc.  
Women for Orange County  
Working Partnerships USA  
YWCA Berkeley/Oakland

### **Colorado**

Colorado Lactation Consultant Association  
Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR)  
YWCA Boulder County

### **Connecticut**

Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)  
Fairfield County's Community Foundation  
YWCA Greenwich  
YWCA-New Britain

### **District of Columbia**

Church World Service  
Jews United for Justice  
National Council of Churches  
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)  
Redstone Center for Prevention and Wellness  
RESULTS DC/MD  
Trust for America's Health  
YWCA National Capital Area

### **Florida**

Central Florida Behavioral Health Network  
Florida Alliance of CDCs, Inc.  
Florida Black Women's Roundtable  
Florida National Organization for Women Education Fund  
Florida Rising  
Pinellas County NOW (National Organization for Women)  
Poder Latinx  
Progress Florida  
YWCA South Florida

### **Georgia**

9to5 Georgia

### **Hawai'i**

Hawaii Children's Action Network  
YWCA Oahu  
YWCA of Kauai

### **Illinois**

Beyond Hunger  
Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI) / POWER-PAC IL  
HealthConnect One  
Illinois NOW  
New Moms  
Provincial Council Clerics of St. Viator  
Women Employed  
YWCA Elgin  
YWCA Evanston North Shore  
YWCA Evanston North Shore  
YWCA Kankakee  
YWCA McLean County  
YWCA Metropolitan Chicago  
YWCA Northwestern Illinois  
YWCA of the Metro East  
YWCA of the University of Illinois  
YWCA Southwestern Illinois

### **Indiana**

American Association of University Women Indianapolis (AAUW Indianapolis)  
Indiana Association of Area Agencies on Aging  
Indiana Institute for Working Families  
Indiana National Organization for Women  
LifeTime Resources, Inc.  
MCCOY (Marion County Commission on Youth)  
Monroe County NOW  
Women4Change Indiana  
YWCA Central Indiana  
YWCA of Northwest Indiana

### **Iowa**

Iowa National Organization for Women

### **Kansas**

Dominican Sisters Ministry of Presence  
Kansas Action for Children  
Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition  
YWCA Northeast Kansas

### **Kentucky**

National Association of Social Workers - Kentucky Chapter.

### **Louisiana**

Louisiana Breastfeeding Coalition



National Association of Social Workers - Louisiana Chapter

**Maine**

Alzheimer's Association, Maine Chapter  
Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence  
Maine Council on Aging  
Maine Women's Lobby Education Fund  
National Association of Social Workers, Maine Chapter  
Paid Leave for ME  
Planned Parenthood of Northern New England

**Maryland**

Public Justice Center

**Massachusetts**

Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action  
Southeastern Massachusetts  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
YWCA Cambridge  
YWCA Cambridge  
YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts

**Michigan**

Detroit Disability Power  
Michigan League for Public Policy  
Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network (MUUSJN)  
Mothering Justice  
National Council of Gray Panthers Networks  
Oakland Forward

**Minnesota**

ISALIAH (MN)  
TakeAction Minnesota  
YWCA Mankato  
YWCA Minneapolis  
YWCA St. Paul

**Mississippi**

Every Mother, Inc.  
National Organization for Women of Mississippi

**Missouri**

Healthy Nourishment, LLC  
National Organization for Women, Columbia Area

**Montana**

Lactation Associates of Montana  
Montana Women Vote

**Nebraska**

ACLU of Nebraska  
Inclusive Communities  
Nebraska Appleseed  
Voices for Children in Nebraska  
YWCA Lincoln  
YWCA of Grand Island

**Nevada**

Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada

**New Hampshire**

Campaign for a Family Friendly Economy, NH  
YWCA New Hampshire

**New Jersey**

Family Voices NJ  
New Jersey Citizen Action  
NJ State Industrial Union Council  
NJ Time to Care Coalition  
Office of Peace, Justice, and Ecological Integrity, Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth  
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network  
YWCA Northern New Jersey

**New Mexico**

Native Women Lead  
Southwest Women's Law Center

**New York**

Claire Heureuse Community Center, Inc.  
ideas42  
National Equality Action Team (NEAT)  
SparkAction  
The New York Women's Foundation  
YWCA Binghamton and Broome County  
YWCA Mohawk Valley  
YWCA White Plains & Central Westchester

**North Carolina**

Breastfeed Durham  
Breastfeed Orange NC  
Child Care Services Association  
Children First/Communities In Schools of Buncombe  
Equality North Carolina  
National Association of Social Workers North Carolina  
NC Early Education Coalition  
NC Justice Center  
North Carolina Council of Churches  
RESULTS Raleigh

Think Babies™ NC Alliance  
TriadNOW  
YWCA Central Carolinas  
YWCA of the Lower Cape Fear

**Ohio**

Children's Defense Fund-Ohio  
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc., Central Ohio Chapter  
National Council of Jewish Women Cleveland  
Ohio Domestic Violence Network  
Ohio Federation of Teachers  
The Ohio Women's Public Policy Network  
The Women's Fund of Central Ohio  
Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio  
Women's Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation  
YWCA Canton  
YWCA Dayton  
YWCA Greater Cincinnati  
YWCA Greater Cleveland  
YWCA Mahoning Valley  
YWCA of Northwest Ohio

**Oregon**

Cascade AIDS Project  
National Organization for Women, Oregon  
Our Children Oregon  
ROSE Community Development

**Pennsylvania**

Coalition for Low Income Pennsylvanians  
First Up; Champions for Early Education  
Just Harvest  
Pennsylvania Council of Churches  
Sisters of Saint Joseph  
Unitarian Universalist Justice PA  
United Steelworkers Local 3657  
Women and Girls Foundation of Southwest PA  
Women's Law Project  
YWCA Allentown  
YWCA Butler  
YWCA Hanover  
YWCA Lancaster  
YWCA Tri-County Area

**Rhode Island**

Economic Progress Institute  
Rhode Island Chapter of the National Organization for Women  
Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless  
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

The Womxn Project  
Women's Fund of Rhode Island

**South Carolina**

Women's Rights and Empowerment Network  
YWCA Greater Charleston

**Tennessee**

SocioEnergetics Foundation

**Texas**

Children's Defense Fund - Texas  
Every Texan  
Texas State National Organization for Women (NOW)  
YWCA Greater Austin

**Vermont**

Main Street Alliance of Vermont

**Virginia**

Blue Star Families  
Church World Service  
Maternal Mental Health Leadership alliance  
National Military Family Association  
National Respite Coalition  
Social Action Linking Together (SALT)  
Virginia Chapter, National Organization for Women  
Virginia Organizing  
YWCA of Central Virginia  
YWCA South Hampton Roads

**Washington**

Economic Opportunity Institute  
Northwest Harvest  
YWCA Kitsap County  
YWCA Pierce County  
YWCA Yakima

**West Virginia**

National Association of Social Workers West Virginia Chapter  
Rise Up WV  
West Virginians for Affordable Health Care  
WV Citizen Action  
WV FREE

**Wisconsin**

9to5  
Mid-Day Women's Alliance

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