

# Paid Leave Means A Stronger D.C.

JANUARY 2021

**Washington, D.C., was the first city to enact a paid family and medical leave insurance program,** and the first without the infrastructure of an existing temporary disability insurance program. Since July 2020, workers in D.C. can take eight weeks of paid parental leave, six weeks of paid family leave and two weeks of paid medical leave. Built on lessons learned from older state programs, the program includes a progressive wage replacement rate and a more inclusive definition of “family” for family caregiving.<sup>1</sup>

**The coronavirus pandemic will have long-term consequences on District residents’ health, caregiving needs and economic stability.**

- ▶ Women, especially Black, Latinx, AAPI and Native American mothers, were hit hardest by pandemic closures, working in many of the most-affected industries and bearing the brunt of increased caregiving without schools or child care.<sup>2</sup> At the end of 2020, D.C.’s labor force had lost 15,000 workers<sup>3</sup> and five times as many women were unemployed compared to one year earlier.<sup>4</sup> If nothing is done, women nationwide will lose \$64.5 billion in wages each year from reduced labor force participation and lower work hours.<sup>5</sup>
- ▶ More than 47,000 District residents – 11 percent Black, 4 percent Latinx and 1 percent AAPI – work in frontline industries,<sup>6</sup> facing heightened risks of exposure and challenges managing family caregiving needs.
- ▶ More than 33,000 District residents contracted COVID-19 in the first year of the pandemic.<sup>7</sup> An estimated 10 to 15 percent – 3,300 to 5,000 – will experience long-term symptoms including difficulty breathing, chest pain or fatigue that may require care from a loved one or interfere with work.<sup>8</sup>

**Paid leave means a more robust, equitable recovery from the pandemic.**

**District residents are caught between their work and family responsibilities.**

People in the  
District both work  
and provide care

- ▶ More than 9,000 children are born in the District of Columbia each year, and in 81 percent of all the District of Columbia households with children – more than 95,000 homes – all parents have paying jobs.<sup>9</sup>
- ▶ Women’s wages support their households. In the District of Columbia, 87 percent of Black mothers and 57 percent of white mothers are key breadwinners, Latina and AAPI mothers excluded.<sup>10</sup>

- ▶ Women make up more than half of the District of Columbia’s labor force (52 percent) and more than one-third of its business owners (35 percent).<sup>11</sup>
- ▶ Across the country, many men want to play a larger role in caring for their children,<sup>12</sup> but unsupportive policies and stigma hold them back.<sup>13</sup>

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

**District families will face increased family and medical care needs.**

- ▶ Nearly one in six workers is age 55 and older.<sup>14</sup>
- ▶ Older workers are more likely to experience serious medical conditions that require care.<sup>15</sup>

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

**D.C.’s caregiving needs are significant, and growing**

**The District is now seeing the benefits of paid leave for workers, families and businesses.**

**D.C.’s paid leave program will help thousands**

- ▶ Paid leave helps improve health outcomes and helps working people remain economically secure and stay connected to their jobs.<sup>16</sup>
- ▶ Businesses’ employee retention can also improve significantly with paid leave, helping to strengthen bottom lines.<sup>17</sup>
- ▶ State programs like the District’s are used as intended by workers without overburdening employers.<sup>18</sup>

**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.**

**D.C. will soon add to the growing body of evidence 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 Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act is a common sense solution that builds on state models to address the country’s paid leave crisis. Seventy-nine percent of 2020 voters – 67 percent of Republicans, 77 percent of Independents and 93 percent of Democrats – support a permanent paid family and medical leave program for people with health needs or child or family care.<sup>19</sup>

**A national paid leave plan – the FAMILY Act – is the solution**

**The FAMILY Act means a stronger economy, healthier families and businesses, and greater equality for all women and families.**

**For more on the FAMILY Act, visit [NationalPartnership.org/theFAMILYAct](https://NationalPartnership.org/theFAMILYAct).**

- 1 National Partnership for Women & Families. (2019, August). *State Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Laws*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/paid-leave/state-paid-family-leave-laws.pdf>
- 2 Mason, C. N., Flynn, A., & Sun, S. (2020). *Build(ing) the Future: Bold Policies for a Gender Equitable Recovery*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from Institute for Women's Policy Research website: <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Policies-for-a-Gender-Equitable-Recovery-Finalsem2.pdf>
- 3 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020, December). *State Employment and Unemployment (Table 2. Civilian labor force and unemployment by state and selected area, not seasonally adjusted)*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics website: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/laus.t02.htm>
- 4 U.S. Department of Labor. (2020, December). *Characteristics of Unemployment Insurance Claimants: Total Claimants*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from <https://oui.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/chariu2020/2020Nov.html>. Unpublished calculation based on number of female unemployment claimants in November 2019 and November 2020; due to challenges filing and qualifying for unemployment benefits, this likely undercounts the total number of women who have lost jobs but are still in the labor force.
- 5 Kashen, J., Glynn, S. J., & Novello, A. (2020, October). *How COVID-19 Sent Women's Workforce Progress Backward*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from Center for American Progress website: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2020/10/30/492582/covid-19-sent-womens-workforce-progress-backward/>
- 6 Rho, H. J., Brown, H., & Fremstad, S. (2020, April). *A Basic Demographic Profile of Workers in Frontline Industries*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from Center for Economic and Policy Research website: <https://cepr.net/a-basic-demographic-profile-of-workers-in-frontline-industries/>
- 7 *Washington Post*. (n.d.) Coronavirus: Case and death counts by place. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/national/coronavirus-us-cases-deaths/?itid=sn\\_coronavirus\\_2/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/national/coronavirus-us-cases-deaths/?itid=sn_coronavirus_2/). Data reflects cumulative reported cases by state through January 14, 2021.
- 8 Scientific understanding of this new disease is still developing and estimates vary of the incidence of lasting health effects of COVID-19; 10 to 15 percent is a conservative estimate for symptoms lasting longer than 90 days, particularly among patients with severe illness. See Cirulli, E. T., Schiabor Barrett, K. M., Riffle, S., Bolze, A., et al. (2020, December 1). Long-term COVID-19 symptoms in a large unselected population. medRxiv. Preprint. doi: 10.1101/2020.10.07.20208702; del Rio, C., Collins, L. F., & Malani, P. (2020, October 5). Long-term Health Consequences of COVID-19. *Journal of the American Medical Association*. 324(17): 1723-1724. doi: 10.1001/jama.2020.19719; Yelin, D., Wirtheim, E., Vetter, P., Kalil, A. C., et al. (2020, September 1). Long-term consequences of COVID-19: research needs. *The Lancet: Infectious Diseases*. 20(10): P1115-1117. doi: 10.1016/S1473-3099(20)30701-5
- 9 Hamilton, B. E., Martin, J. A., & Osterman, M. J. K. (2020, May). Births: Provisional Data for 2019. *Vital Statistics Rapid Release*, 8. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsrr/vsrr-8-508.pdf>; U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2019, Geographies: All States within United States and Puerto Rico, Table DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=dp03&tid=ACSDP1Y2019.DP03&hidePreview=false>
- 10 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 14 January 2021, 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.
- 11 See note 9, U.S. Census Bureau; Institute for Women's Policy Research. (2018). *Status of Women in the States*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from <https://statusofwomendata.org/state-data/>
- 12 Lenhart, A., Swenson, H., & Schulte, B. (2019, December). *Lifting the Barriers to Paid Family and Medical Leave for Men in the United States*. Retrieved 14 January 2021 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 14 January 2021, 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/>
- 13 U.S. Department of Labor. (2015, September 4). *The Cost of Doing Nothing: The Price We All Pay Without Paid Leave Policies to Support America's 21st Century Working Families*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from Cornell University Library website: <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/78447>
- 14 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020, August). *Expanded State Employment Status Demographic Data (Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population in states by sex, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and intermediate age, 2019 annual averages)*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from <https://www.bls.gov/lau/ex14tables.htm> (Unpublished calculation by the National Partnership for Women & Families)
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17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Lake Research Partners and the Tarrance Group pre-election and election night omnibus survey of 2,400 registered voters nationwide who voted in the 2020 elections conducted October 31-November 3, 2020. See National Partnership for Women & Families, Voters Show Bipartisan Support for Permanent Paid Sick Days and Paid Family and Medical Leave, <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/voters-show-bipartisan-support-for-permanent-paid-sick-days-and-paid-family-and-medical-leave.pdf>

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](http://NationalPartnership.org)

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