

# Paid Leave Means A Stronger North Carolina

FEBRUARY 2023

Most working people in the United States do not have paid family leave through their jobs,<sup>1</sup> including **about 78 percent — about 4 million workers — in North Carolina. Even *unpaid* leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act is inaccessible for 65 percent of North Carolinians.**<sup>2</sup> The lack of paid leave exacerbates the state's economic and care challenges — from the rising cost of living to an aging population, with devastating costs for North Carolinians and their families, public health and the economy.

**Impossible choices between work and family are hurting North Carolina's economy, and women suffer most. Paid leave means people — especially women — aren't forced to leave the labor force to care for their families or health.**

North  
Carolina's  
economy and  
families are  
suffering

- ▶ If women in North Carolina participated in the labor force at the same rate as women in countries with paid leave, there would be an estimated 180,000 additional workers in the state and \$5.8 billion more wages earned statewide.<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ Nationally, if women participated in the U.S. labor force at that rate, our economy would benefit from more than \$650 billion in additional economic activity each year.<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ In North Carolina, a typical worker who takes four weeks of unpaid leave loses nearly \$3,000 in income.<sup>5</sup> As the cost of living rises, income loss hits families especially hard.
- ▶ Paid leave improves employee retention, morale and productivity, reducing turnover for employers of all sizes and boosting the economy. But small employers often cannot provide the benefit — and universal paid leave would help them do that.<sup>6</sup>

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

- ▶ About 119,800 children are born in North Carolina each year, and in 70 percent of all North Carolina households with children — nearly 1,523,000 homes — all parents report to work.<sup>7</sup>
- ▶ Women's wages support their households. In North Carolina, 80 percent of Black mothers, 50 percent of white mothers, 45 percent of Latina mothers and 40 percent of AAPI mothers are key family breadwinners.

People in  
North  
Carolina both  
work and  
provide care

State-level data is limited, but nationally 64 percent of Native American mothers are breadwinners.<sup>8</sup>

- ▶ Women make up nearly half of North Carolina's labor force (48 percent) and more than one-quarter of its business owners (28 percent).<sup>9</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>10</sup>

**North Carolina 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.**

- ▶ Older workers and older adults are more likely to experience serious medical conditions that require care.<sup>11</sup>
- ▶ Nearly one-quarter of North Carolina workers are 55 and older,<sup>12</sup> and in the next 20 years, the share of North Carolina's population age 65 and older will grow by more than one-eighth.<sup>13</sup>
- ▶ About 42 percent of North Carolina nursing homes have a shortage of direct care workers.<sup>14</sup> Paid leave reduces nursing home utilization and can help recruitment and retention of care workers.<sup>15</sup>
- ▶ An estimated 352,000 North Carolinians report having long-term COVID-19 symptoms that affect their daily activities.<sup>16</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>17</sup>

**The state's caregiving needs are growing**

**North Carolinians need a common sense, national paid leave program. We recommend one 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 for workers to meet their care and health needs;
  - ▶ 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, such as Social Security or the Child Tax Credit.

**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).**

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1 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2022, September). *National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2022* (See Excel tables, Civilian workers, Short term disability and Leave). Retrieved 15 December 2022, from <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2022/home.htm>. State estimates not available; calculation uses estimates based on Census division.

2 diversitydatakids.org. (2023, January). *Indicators of FMLA Eligibility and Affordability for Working Adults*. Retrieved 12 January 2023, from Brandeis University, The Heller School, Institute for Child, Youth and Family Policy website: [https://data.diversitydatakids.org/dataset?vocab\\_Subtopic=FMLA&\\_ga=2.14449139.551199344.1673292061-1693714331.1656615545](https://data.diversitydatakids.org/dataset?vocab_Subtopic=FMLA&_ga=2.14449139.551199344.1673292061-1693714331.1656615545); Workers are considered unable to take unpaid FMLA leave because they are either ineligible based on employer size or job tenure requirements or because 12 weeks of lost wages from unpaid leave would result in their family income dropping to or below 200 percent of the Supplemental Poverty Measure.

3 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2022). *Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Expanded State Employment Status Demographic Data (2021 Annual Averages)*. Retrieved 13 December 2022, from <https://www.bls.gov/lau/ex14tables.htm>; U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2021 (Table B20017)*. Retrieved 15 December 2022, from [data.census.gov](https://data.census.gov). For methodology, see Novello, A. (2021, July). *The Cost of Inaction: How a Lack of Family Care Policies Burdens the U.S. Economy and Families*. Retrieved 15 December 2022 from National Partnership for Women & Families website: <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/other/cost-of-inaction-lack-of-family-care-burdens-families.pdf>

4 Ibid.

5 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2022, March). *May 2021 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates (Median Income, All Occupations)*. Retrieved 15 December 2022, from <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>.

6 National Partnership for Women & Families. (2022, February). *Paid Leave Works: Evidence from State Programs*. Retrieved 15 December 2022, from <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-leave/paid-leave-works-evidence-from-state-programs.pdf>

7 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, May). *National Vital Statistics Rapid Release, Births: Provisional Data for 2021* (Table 4. Total number of births, by state of residence, provisional 2021, and percentage of cesarean delivery and preterm births, by state of residence: United States, each state and territory, final 2020 and provisional 2021). Retrieved 13 December 2022, from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsrr/vsrr020.pdf>; U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2021, Geographies: All States within United States and Puerto Rico, Table DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics*. Retrieved 13 December 2022, from <https://data.census.gov>

8 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 15 December 2022, from Institute for Women's Policy Research website: <http://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Holding-Up-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, 64 percent of Native American mothers, 60 percent of mothers identifying as multiracial or "other" race, 49 percent of Latina mothers, 48 percent of white mothers and 43 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander mothers are key breadwinners.

9 See note 3, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Institute for Women's Policy Research. (2021). *Status of Women in the States (Table 4.1)*. Retrieved 15 December 2022 from <https://statusofwomensdata.org/explore-the-data/poverty-opportunity/additional-state-data/composite/>

10 Lenhart, A., Swenson, H., & Schulte, B. (2019, December). *Lifting the Barriers to Paid Family and Medical Leave for Men in the United States*. Retrieved 13 December 2022 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 15 December 2022, 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/>

11 Atkinson, I. (2021, September). *Our Aging, Caring Nation: Why a U.S. Paid Leave Plan Must Provide More Than Time to Care for New Children*. Retrieved 15 December 2022, from <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-leave/our-aging-caring-nation-why-a-us-paid-leave-plan-must-provide-more-than-time-to-care-for-new-children.pdf>

12 See note 3, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

13 See note 3, 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 15 December 2022, from <http://demographics.coopercenter.org/national-population-projections/?q=demographics/national-population-projections> (Unpublished calculation based on projected rate of growth of older adult population from 2019 to 2040)

14 AARP Public Policy Institute and Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami University in Ohio. (2022, November). *COVID-19 Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard. (Most recent data from October 2022)*. Retrieved 15 December 2022, from <https://www.aarp.org/ppi/issues/caregiving/info-2020/nursing-home-covid-dashboard.html>

15 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 December 2022, from PHI National website: <https://www.phinational.org/caringforthefuture/wouldyoustay/>

16 U.S. Census Bureau. (2022, November 29). *Week 51 Household Pulse Survey: November 2 – November 14* (Health Table 11. Duration of COVID-19 Symptoms and Ability to Carry Out Everyday Activities, by Select Characteristics). Retrieved 2 December 2022, from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2022/demo/hhp/hhp51.html>

17 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 December 2022, from The Arc of the U.S. website: <https://thearc.org/policy-advocacy/paid-family-medical-leave/>

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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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