

# Paid Leave Means A Stronger North Carolina

FEBRUARY 2022

The vast majority of working people in the United States do not have paid family leave through their jobs,<sup>1</sup> including **about 79 percent of working people — about 3,652,000 workers – in North Carolina. Even unpaid leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act is inaccessible for 61 percent of North Carolinians.**<sup>2</sup> The lack of paid leave has 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, reducing turnover for employers of all sizes and boosting the economy.**

North  
Carolina's  
economy  
and families

- ▶ If women in North Carolina participated in the labor force at the same rate as women in countries with paid leave, there would be more than 191,000 additional workers in the state and \$7.7 billion more in 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>
- ▶ Paid leave improves employee retention, morale and productivity, strengthening bottom lines — but small employers often cannot provide the benefit — and universal paid leave would help them do that.<sup>5</sup>

**The pandemic has left North Carolinians struggling with their health, finances and the ability to work. Paid leave means being able to cope with work and bills during a health crisis.**

- ▶ More than 2,441,000 North Carolinians have contracted COVID-19, with older adults and people of color especially affected.<sup>6</sup> Up to one in four will experience "long-haul COVID" symptoms including difficulty breathing, headache, dizziness, chest pain or fatigue that may require care from a loved one or interfere with work.<sup>7</sup>
- ▶ In North Carolina, a typical worker who takes four weeks of unpaid leave loses nearly \$3,000 in income.<sup>8</sup>
- ▶ Since 2020, North Carolina workers sick with COVID-19 have lost an estimated \$1.0 billion in wages due to lack of or inadequate paid leave.<sup>9</sup>
- ▶ In January 2022, nearly 205,500 North Carolinians were not working because they were sick with or caring for someone with COVID-19, and more than 186,900 due to another illness or disability.

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

**People in North Carolina both work and provide care**

- ▶ About 116,700 children are born in North Carolina each year, and in 71 percent of all North Carolina households with children — more than 1.5 million homes — all parents report to work.<sup>10</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 of AAPI mothers are key family breadwinners. State-level data is limited, but nationally 64 percent of Native American mothers are key breadwinners.<sup>11</sup>
- ▶ Women make up nearly half of North Carolina’s labor force (49 percent) and more than one-quarter of its business owners (28 percent).<sup>12</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>13</sup>

**North Carolina families will face increased family and medical care needs. Paid leave means older adults and working people of all ages can get the support they need to receive and provide critical care.**

- ▶ Nearly one in four workers is 55 and older.<sup>14</sup>
- ▶ In the next 20 years, the share of the state’s population age 65 and older will grow by nearly one-sixth.<sup>15</sup>
- ▶ Older workers are more likely to experience serious medical conditions that require care.<sup>16</sup>
- ▶ A national paid leave program could add about 234,500 family caregivers to North Carolina’s workforce by 2030.<sup>17</sup>

**The state’s caregiving needs are significant, and 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 to address their own health conditions, to care for seriously ill, injured or disabled family members and to welcome newborn, newly adopted or foster children; and
- ▶ Has a sustainable funding source that is affordable for workers, employers and the government without harming other essential programs.

**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).

- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021, September). *National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2021* (Tables 17 and 33). Retrieved 26 January 2022, from <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2021/employee-benefits-in-the-united-states-march-2021.pdf>; Percent of civilian workers who have access to paid family leave by U.S. region: Northeast (28 percent), South (22 percent), Midwest (22 percent) and West (23 percent).
- <sup>2</sup> diversitydatakids.org. (2020). *Working adults who are eligible and can afford FMLA unpaid leave (percent) by race/ethnicity*. Retrieved 26 January 2022 from Brandeis University, The Heller School, Institute for Child, Youth and Family Policy website [https://data.diversitydatakids.org/dataset/fmla\\_a\\_eligaff\\_re\\_p-working-adults-who-are-eligible-and-can-afford-fmla-unpaid-leave--percent--by-ra](https://data.diversitydatakids.org/dataset/fmla_a_eligaff_re_p-working-adults-who-are-eligible-and-can-afford-fmla-unpaid-leave--percent--by-ra); Workers are considered unable to take unpaid FMLA leave because they are either ineligible based on employer size or job tenure requirements or because 32.3 days of lost wages from unpaid leave, the average length of an FMLA leave, would result in their family income dropping to or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
- <sup>3</sup> Novello, A. (2021, July). *The Cost of Inaction: How a Lack of Family Care Policies Burdens the U.S. Economy and Families (Appendix Table)*. Retrieved 26 January 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>
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> National Partnership for Women & Families. (2019, September). *Paid Leave Works: Evidence from State Programs*. Retrieved 26 January 2022, from <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-leave/paid-leave-works-evidence-from-state-programs.pdf>
- <sup>6</sup> *Washington Post*. (n.d.) Coronavirus: Case and death counts by place. Retrieved 2 February 2022, 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 February 2, 2022.
- <sup>7</sup> Scientific understanding of this new disease is still developing and estimates vary of the incidence of lasting health effects of COVID-19. Recent estimates indicate as many as one in four people with COVID-19 have symptoms more than two months after the onset of illness, including those whose COVID-19 was initially mild. Longue, J. K., Ranko, N. M., McCulloch, D. J., et al. (2021, February). Sequelae in Adults at 6 Months After COVID-19 Infection. *JAMA Network Open*, 4(2): e210830. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.0830; Huang, Y., Pinto, M. D., Borelli, J. L, et al. (2021, March). COVID Symptoms, Symptom Clusters, and Predictors for Becoming a Long-Hauler: Looking for Clarity in the Haze of the Pandemic. *medRxiv* (preprint). doi:10.1101/2021.03.03.21252086. See also Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, September 16). *Post-Covid Conditions*. Retrieved 26 January 2022, from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/long-term-effects/index.html> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/long-term-effects/index.html>
- <sup>8</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021, March). *May 2020 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates (Median Income, All Occupations)*. Retrieved 21 January 2022, from <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>.
- <sup>9</sup> Integrated Benefits Institute. (2021, December 8). *Lost Work Time for U.S. Employee COVID-19 Cases (State COVID-19 Cases and Lost Work Time Costs, 12/8/2021)*. Retrieved 16 December 2021, from <https://www.ibiweb.org/covid-19-costs-employers-nearly-1-billion-per-week-due-to-lost-time-from-work-according-to-integrated-benefits-institute-analysis/>
- <sup>10</sup> Hamilton, B. E., Martin, J. A., & Osterman, M. J. K. (2021, May). Births: Provisional Data for 2020. Vital Statistics Rapid Release, 12. Retrieved 26 January 2022, from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsrr/vsrr-12-508.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 26 January 2022, from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=dp03&tid=ACSDP1Y2019.DP03&hidePreview=false>
- <sup>11</sup> 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 26 January 2022, 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.
- <sup>12</sup> See note 10, U.S. Census Bureau; Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research. (2021). *Status of Women in the States (Table 4.1)*. Retrieved 26 January 2021 from <https://statusofwomensdata.org/explore-the-data/poverty-opportunity/additional-state-data/composite/>
- <sup>13</sup> Lenhart, A., Swenson, H., & Schulte, B. (2019, December). *Lifting the Barriers to Paid Family and Medical Leave for Men in the United States*. Retrieved 26 January 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 26 January 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/>
- <sup>14</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021, July). *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, 2020 annual averages)*. Retrieved 26 January 2022, from <https://www.bls.gov/lau/ex14tables.htm> (Unpublished calculation by the National Partnership for Women & Families)
- <sup>15</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). *American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates 2019, Geographies: All States within United States and Puerto Rico, Table S0101: Age and Sex*. Retrieved 26 January 2022, from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=s0101&tid=ACSS1Y2019.S0101&hidePreview=false>; University of Virginia Demographics Research Group. (2018). *National Population Projections: Projections for the 50 States and D.C. (Age and Sex)*. Retrieved 26 January 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)

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<sup>16</sup> 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 26 January 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>

<sup>17</sup> Novello, A. (2021, November). *Paid Leave Could Keep More Than 6 Million Caregivers Connected to the Labor Force by 2030*. Retrieved 26 January 2022 from National Partnership for Women & Families website: <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-leave/paid-leave-caregivers-connected-2030.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](https://NationalPartnership.org).

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