

Paid Leave Means A Stronger North Carolina

JANUARY 2021

The vast majority of working people in the United States do not have paid family leave through their jobs.¹ **In North Carolina, even *unpaid* leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act is inaccessible for 61 percent of working people.**² As the coronavirus pandemic made clear, the lack of paid leave has had devastating costs to North Carolinians and their families, public health and the economy.



The coronavirus pandemic will have long-term consequences on North Carolinians' 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.³ At the end of 2020, North Carolina's labor force had lost 195,000 workers⁴ and more than three-and-a-half times as many women were unemployed compared to one year earlier.⁵ If nothing is done, women nationwide will lose \$64.5 billion in wages each year from reduced labor force participation and lower work hours.⁶
- ▶ More than 975,000 North Carolinians – 29 percent Black, 6 percent Latinx and 3 percent AAPI – work in frontline industries,⁷ facing heightened risks of exposure and challenges managing family caregiving needs.
- ▶ More than 651,000 North Carolinians contracted COVID-19 in the first year of the pandemic.⁸ An estimated 10 to 15 percent – 65,100 to 97,700 – will experience long-term symptoms including difficulty breathing, chest pain or fatigue that may require care from a loved one or interfere with work.⁹

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

North Carolinians are caught between their work and family responsibilities.

People in North Carolina both work and provide care

- ▶ More than 118,600 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 have paying jobs.¹⁰
- ▶ 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 breadwinners.¹¹
- ▶ Women make up nearly half of North Carolina's labor force (49 percent) and more than one-quarter of its business owners (28 percent).¹²

- ▶ Across the country, many men want to play a larger role in caring for their children,¹³ but unsupportive policies and stigma hold them back.¹⁴

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

North Carolina families will face increased family and medical care needs.

- ▶ More than one in five workers are age 55 and older.¹⁵
- ▶ In the next 20 years, the share of the state’s population age 65 and older will grow by nearly one-sixth.¹⁶
- ▶ Older workers are more likely to experience serious medical conditions that require care.¹⁷

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

The state’s caregiving needs are significant, and growing

Impossible choices between job and family are hurting the economy, and women suffer most.

North Carolina’s economy and families are suffering

- ▶ In North Carolina, there is a 12 percentage point gap in labor force participation between men and women, in part because the United States lacks family friendly policies.¹⁸
- ▶ Nationally, if women participated in the U.S. labor force at the same rates as women in countries with paid leave, our economy would benefit from more than \$500 billion in additional economic activity each year.¹⁹
- ▶ Paid leave improves employee retention, morale and productivity, strengthening bottom lines – but small employers often cannot provide it on their own.²⁰

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.

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

North Carolinians need a common sense solution to address the country’s paid leave crisis.

North Carolinians need the Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act, a common sense solution to address the country’s paid leave crisis. The FAMILY Act would reduce the number of working families in North Carolina facing significant economic insecurity when they need to take family and medical leave by 80 percent.²¹ 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.²²

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.

-
- ¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020, September). *National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2020* (Tables 16 and 31). Retrieved 14 January 2021, from <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2020/employee-benefits-in-the-united-states-march-2020.pdf>; Percent of civilian workers who have access to paid family leave by U.S. region: Northeast (28 percent), South (18 percent), Midwest (20 percent) and West (20 percent).
- ² diversitydatakids.org. (2020). *Working adults who are eligible and can afford FMLA unpaid leave (percent) by race/ethnicity*. Retrieved 14 January 2021 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; 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.
- ³ 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-Finals2.pdf>
- ⁴ 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>
- ⁵ 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.
- ⁶ 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/>
- ⁷ 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/>
- ⁸ *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/. Data reflects cumulative reported cases by state through January 14, 2021.
- ⁹ 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., Kallil, 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
- ¹⁰ 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>
- ¹¹ 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.
- ¹² See note 10, U.S. Census Bureau; Institute for Women’s Policy Research. (2018). *Status of Women in the States*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from <https://statusofwomensdata.org/state-data/>
- ¹³ 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/>

¹⁴ 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>

¹⁵ 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)

¹⁶ 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 14 January 2021, from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=s0101&tid=ACSST1Y2019.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 14 January 2021, 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)

¹⁷ National Partnership for Women & Families. (2017, June). *Our Aging, Caring Nation: Why a U.S. Paid Leave Plan Must Provide More Than Time to Care for New Children*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/caregivingreport>

¹⁸ See note 10, U.S. Census Bureau. (Unpublished calculation by the National Partnership for Women & Families of the difference in labor force participation rates for adult women and men by age category)

¹⁹ See note 14.

²⁰ National Partnership for Women & Families. (2019, September). *Paid Leave Works: Evidence from State Programs*. Retrieved 14 January 2021, from <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-leave/paid-leave-works-evidence-from-state-programs.pdf>

²¹ diversitydatakids.org. (2020). *Working adults living in families under 200% FPL before and after wage loss due to paid or unpaid FML (percent) by parent status*. Retrieved 14 January 2021 from Brandeis University, The Heller School, Institute for Child, Youth and Family Policy website: https://data.diversitydatakids.org/dataset/pfml_pov_par_p-working-adults-living-in-families-under-200-fpl-before-and-after-wage-loss-due-to-pa (Unpublished calculation by the National Partnership for Women & Families)

²² 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.

© 2021 National Partnership for Women & Families. All rights reserved.