Paid Leave Means A Stronger Pennsylvania

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The vast majority of working people in the United States do not have paid family leave through their jobs.\(^1\) In Pennsylvania, even unpaid leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act is inaccessible for 60 percent of working people.\(^2\) As the coronavirus pandemic made clear, the lack of paid leave has had devastating costs to Pennsylvanians and their families, public health and the economy.

The coronavirus pandemic will have long-term consequences on Pennsylvanians’ 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.\(^3\) In Pennsylvania, more than four times as many women were unemployed at the end of 2020 compared to one year earlier.\(^4\) If nothing is done, women nationwide will lose $64.5 billion in wages each year from reduced labor force participation and lower work hours.\(^5\)
- More than 1,474,000 Pennsylvanians – 14 percent Black, 6 percent Latinx and 4 percent AAPI – work in frontline industries,\(^6\) facing heightened risks of exposure and challenges managing family caregiving needs.
- More than 749,000 Pennsylvanians contracted COVID-19 in the first year of the pandemic.\(^7\) An estimated 10 to 15 percent – 74,900 to 112,300 – will experience long-term symptoms including difficulty breathing, chest pain or fatigue that may require care from a loved one or interfere with work.\(^8\)

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

Pennsylvanians are caught between their work and family responsibilities.

- More than 134,100 children are born in Pennsylvania each year, and in 73 percent of all Pennsylvania households with children – more than 1.8 million homes – all parents have paying jobs.\(^9\)
- Women’s wages support their households. In Pennsylvania, 81 percent of Black mothers, 49 percent of white mothers, 61 percent of Latina mothers and 40 of AAPI mothers are key family breadwinners.\(^10\)
- Women make up nearly half of Pennsylvania’s labor force (48 percent) and more than one-quarter of its business owners (27 percent).\(^11\)
- Across the country, many men want to play a larger role in caring for their children,\(^12\) but unsupportive policies and stigma hold them back.\(^13\)
Pennsylvania families will face increased family and medical care needs.

- More than one in four workers are age 55 and older.¹⁴
- In the next 20 years, the share of the state’s population age 65 and older will grow by one-seventh.¹⁵
- Older workers are more likely to experience serious medical conditions that require care.¹⁶

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

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

- In Pennsylvania, there is a 10 percentage point gap in labor force participation between men and women, in part because the United States lacks family friendly policies.¹⁷
- 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.¹⁸
- Paid leave improves employee retention, morale and productivity, strengthening bottom lines – but small employers often cannot provide it on their own.¹⁹

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.

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

Pennsylvanians 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 Pennsylvania facing significant economic insecurity when they need to take family and medical leave by 83 percent.²⁰ 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.²¹

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.

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.


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.


