

October 28, 2015

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and the tens of millions of working families we represent, we **urge you to become a co-sponsor of the Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act (S. 786/H.R. 1439)**. The FAMILY Act would create a national family and medical leave insurance program that would strengthen the workforce, families, businesses and our economy. **The FAMILY Act is modeled on successful and effective state paid leave laws and would help working women and men meet their caregiving demands while reducing economic inequality and improving economic opportunities for all.**

In America today, basic access to paid family and medical leave depends on winning the “boss lottery” and too many women and men are losing. A mere 13 percent of workers in the United States have access to paid family leave through their employers, and fewer than 40 percent have access to personal medical leave through an employer-provided temporary disability program.¹ Just 50 percent of new mothers take even a few paid days away from their jobs to care for a new child.² And lower-wage workers and workers of color are even less likely to have basic access to paid leave,³ yet they are often most in need of financial resources when a family or medical need arises.

The American people want to have strong families, to be good parents, and to have a job and succeed at it, but they are too often forced to choose one of these priorities over another – and that weakens the entire country. We can do better, and we can be stronger.

The FAMILY Act would create a national paid family and medical leave insurance program.

Employees would earn a portion of their wages for a limited period of time (up to 60 workdays, or 12 workweeks in a year) to address their own serious health issue, including pregnancy or childbirth; to deal with the serious health issue of a family member; to care for a new child; and/or for specific military caregiving and leave purposes. Employees and employers would contribute a small amount in each pay period to a self-sustaining fund, administered through a new Office of Paid Family and Medical Leave. Fund contributions would cover both benefits and administrative costs. Eligibility rules would allow younger, part-time, low-wage and contingent workers to contribute and benefit, regardless of their employer’s size or their length of time on the job.

The FAMILY Act will mean a stronger workforce. Many women and men today are both breadwinners and caregivers, and paid time off for family and medical purposes helps workers – particularly women – stay and succeed in their jobs and receive higher wages over time.⁴

The FAMILY Act will help to bring the United States in line with the rest of the world. The United States is one of just two countries in the world that do not guarantee paid maternity leave to new mothers,⁵ one of five highly competitive countries that do not guarantee paid parental leave to new fathers,⁶ and the only highly competitive country that does not guarantee paid medical leave for serious illness.⁷

The FAMILY Act will strengthen the economic security of working people and their families. Paid leave provides income stability for working people and families at critical moments in their lives. Paid leave also promotes financial independence, especially for growing families. In the year following a birth, new mothers and fathers who take paid leave are less likely than parents who do not to need public assistance.⁸

The FAMILY Act will mean improved health outcomes for all. New mothers who take paid leave are more likely to take the amount of time recommended by doctors,⁹ and their children are more likely to be breastfed, receive medical check-ups and get critical immunizations.¹⁰ An additional 10 weeks of paid leave for new parents, on average, reduces post-neonatal mortality by up to 4.5 percent.¹¹ The presence of a parent shortens a child's hospital stay by 31 percent.¹² And active parental involvement in a child's hospital care may head off future health care needs and costs, which is particularly true for children with chronic health conditions.¹³ Paid leave enables people to help older family members with health problems recover from illness, fulfill treatment plans, and avoid complications and hospital readmissions.¹⁴

The FAMILY Act will strengthen businesses. Paid leave reduces turnover costs and increases employee loyalty. Companies typically pay about one-fifth of an employee's salary to replace that employee.¹⁵ In California, where a successful family leave insurance program exists, workers in low-wage, high-turnover industries are much more likely to return to their jobs after using the state's program.¹⁶ Establishing a national standard would also level the playing field for businesses that want to provide paid leave but currently cannot afford to do so.

The FAMILY Act will strengthen Social Security. Paid leave safeguards the income and retirement security of workers while complementing Social Security. Currently, 48 percent of family caregivers who have to take time off to meet caregiving responsibilities lose income when they do so.¹⁷ On average, a worker who is 50 years of age or older who leaves the workforce to take care of a parent will lose more than \$300,000 in wages and retirement income.¹⁸ By keeping new parents, workers with medical conditions and family caregivers attached to the workforce and paying taxes, a national paid family and medical leave insurance program would strengthen existing social insurance programs.

The FAMILY Act builds on successful state family and medical leave insurance programs. Family leave insurance programs have existed in California since 2004, New Jersey since 2009 and Rhode Island since 2014. Analyses of California's law show that both employers and employees benefit from the program.¹⁹ In New Jersey, the program costs are even lower than expected and public attitudes toward the program are favorable.²⁰ Preliminary analysis of Rhode Island's first year also shows favorable results.²¹

It is well past time for policies that truly honor families. That is why we need a law that guarantees that people can care for themselves and their loved ones no matter where they live, what job they have or who they work for. The FAMILY Act is that law. We urge you to sponsor this critically important legislation today.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

9to5, National Association for Working Women
A Better Balance
Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community
Advocates for Youth
African American Ministers in Action
Alliance for Children and Families
Alliance for Justice
Alzheimer's Foundation of America
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)
American Public Health Association
Association of Flight Attendants - CWA
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals (ARHP)
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Baby Cafe USA, Inc.
Baby-Friendly USA, Inc.
Bend the Arc: A Jewish Partnership for Justice
Black Women's Roundtable of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
Breastfeeding USA
Caring Across Generations
Caring Economy Campaign, Center for Partnership Studies
Catalyst
Center for American Progress Action Fund
Center for Community Change Action
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Parental Leave Leadership
Center for Popular Democracy
Center for Reproductive Rights
Center for the Study of Social Policy
Center for Working Families
Center for Women Policy Studies
Coalition for Improving Maternity Services (CIMS)
Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW)
Coalition on Human Needs
Commission on Social Action on Reform Judaism
Communications Workers of America
Communications Workers of America, National Women's Committee
Demos
Evangelicals for Social Action
Faith in Public Life
Family Equality Council
Family Values @ Work
Feminist Majority

First Focus Campaign for Children
Food Chain Workers Alliance
Girls, Inc.
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
HealthConnect One
Human Rights Campaign
Human Rights Watch
Institute for Science and Human Values, Inc.
Interfaith Worker Justice
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Women International
Jobs With Justice
Justice and Witness Ministries of the United Church of Christ
League of United Latin American Citizens
Legal Momentum
Make it Work Campaign
Main Street Alliance
Mi Familia Vota
Mom-mentum
MomsRising
Ms. Foundation for Women
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Congress of Black Women
National Council of Jewish Women
National Employment Law Project
National Employment Lawyers Association
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Network of Abortion Funds
National Organization for Women (NOW)
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Respite Coalition
National Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Association
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
OUR Walmart

OWL-The Voice of Women 40+
People For the American Way
PHI - Quality Care through Quality Jobs
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Restaurant Opportunities Center United
RESULTS
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
UltraViolet
Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC)
United States Women's Chamber of Commerce
United Steelworkers
UniteWomen
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
USAction
Voter Participation Center
Wellstart International
Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW)
Women Employed
Women's Information Network
Women's Media Center
Working Families Organization
Working America
Young Invincibles
YWCA USA
ZERO TO THREE: National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families

Alabama

UniteWomen Alabama

Alaska

Alaska Breastfeeding Coalition
UniteWomen Alaska

Arizona

UniteWomen Arizona

Arkansas

UniteWomen Arkansas

California

9to5 California

Before and After Baby
BreastfeedLA
California Breastfeeding Coalition
California Women's Law Center
Equal Rights Advocates
Hearthstone Midwifery & Lactation Services
Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center
National Council of Jewish Women, California State Policy Advocacy Network
Parent Voices
Restaurant Opportunities Center of Los Angeles
Restaurant Opportunities Center of the Bay Area
UniteWomen California
YWCA of Watsonville

Colorado

13th Moon Midwifery
9to5 Colorado
Boulder County Breastfeeding Coalition
Colorado American College of Nurse Midwives
Colorado Breastfeeding Coalition
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Colorado Fiscal Institute
Colorado Lactation Consultant Association
Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR)
Colorado Progressive Coalition
UniteWomen Colorado

Connecticut

Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition
Connecticut Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Connecticut Working Families Party
UniteWomen Connecticut
YWCA Hartford Region

Delaware

Breastfeeding Coalition of Delaware
UniteWomen Delaware

District of Columbia

DC Working Families
District of Columbia Breastfeeding Coalition
District of Columbia Employment Justice Center
Restaurant Opportunities Center of Washington, D.C.
UniteWomen District of Columbia

Florida

Central Florida Jobs with Justice
Communications Workers of America Local 3108
Farmworker Association of Florida
Florida Consumer Action Network
Florida Institute for Reform and Empowerment
Florida Main Street Alliance
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, Central Florida
Mi Familia Vota Education Fund - Florida
Organize Now
Palm Beach County Chapter, National Organization for Women
Restaurant Opportunities Center of Florida
South Florida Voices for Working Families
UniteWomen Florida

Georgia

9to5 Georgia
Georgia Rural Urban Summit
Southeastern Lactation Consultants Association (SELCA)
UniteWomen Georgia

Hawaii

Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women
Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition of Hawaii
UniteWomen Hawaii
YWCA Of Oahu

Idaho

UniteWomen Idaho
United Action for Idaho

Illinois

AIDS Foundation of Chicago
Arise Chicago
Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Inc.
Citizen Action Illinois
EverThrive Illinois
National Council of Jewish Women, Chicago North Shore Section
Parents as Teachers
ParentsWork
Project IRENE
Restaurant Opportunities Center of Chicago
UniteWomen Illinois

YWCA McLean County
YWCA of the University of Illinois

Indiana

Indiana Institute for Working Families
UniteWomen Indiana

Iowa

Iowa American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)
Iowa Citizen Action Network
Iowa Council 6, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
Iowa Main Street Alliance
UniteWomen Iowa
YWCA Ames-ISU

Kansas

Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition, Inc.
UniteWomen Kansas

Kentucky

East Kentucky Women's Care Collective
Eastern Kentucky Breastfeeding Coalition
UniteWomen Kentucky

Louisiana

Greater New Orleans Breastfeeding Awareness Coalition
National Council of Jewish Women Greater New Orleans Section
Restaurant Opportunities Center of New Orleans
UniteWomen Louisiana

Maine

Maine People's Alliance
Maine Women's Lobby
UniteWomen Maine

Maryland

Job Opportunities Task Force
Maryland Working Families
Progressive Maryland
Public Justice Center
UniteWomen Maryland

Massachusetts

Coalition for Social Justice
Greater Boston Legal Services
Jewish Alliance for Law & Social Action
Massachusetts Breastfeeding Coalition
Massachusetts Paid Leave Coalition
New England United For Justice
Restaurant Opportunities Center of New England
UniteWomen Massachusetts

Michigan

Michigan Citizen Action
Michigan Council of YWCA's
Michigan League for Public Policy
Restaurant Opportunities Center of Michigan
UniteWomen Michigan

Minnesota

TakeAction Minnesota
UniteWomen Minnesota

Mississippi

UniteWomen Mississippi

Missouri

St. Louis Breastfeeding Coalition
UniteWomen Missouri

Montana

The Arc Montana
UniteWomen Montana

Nebraska

UniteWomen Nebraska
Voices for Children in Nebraska

Nevada

UniteWomen Nevada

New Hampshire

New Hampshire Citizens Alliance
UniteWomen New Hampshire

New Jersey

American Federation of Teachers New Jersey
Family Voices New Jersey
La Casa de Don Pedro
National Council of Jewish Women, Essex County Section
National Council of Jewish Women, New Jersey State Policy Advocacy Network
National Council of Jewish Women, Union County NJ Section
New Jersey Chapter, National Organization of Women
New Jersey Citizen Action
New Jersey Policy Perspective
New Jersey State Industrial Union Council
New Jersey Tenants Organization
New Jersey Working Families Alliance
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
UniteWomen New Jersey

New Mexico

Restaurant Opportunities Center of Albuquerque
UniteWomen New Mexico

New York

ALIGN: The Alliance for a Greater New York
Brooklyn Postpartum
Citizen Action of New York
Community Service Society of New York
ECE PolicyWorks
Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition
ImmerseNYC
National Council of Jewish Women, New York State Policy Advocacy Network
New York Paid Family Leave Insurance Campaign
New York Paid Leave Coalition
New York Working Families Party
Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York
UniteWomen New York
Worksites for Wellness, Inc.
YWCA of Binghamton and Broome County
YWCA of Rochester & Monroe County

North Carolina

AAUW North Carolina
Action NC
Coalition for Improving Maternity Services
National Association of Social Workers, NC Chapter
NC Women United
North Carolina A. Philip Randolph Institute, Inc.

North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition
North Carolina Council of Churches
North Carolina Justice Center
North Carolina Working America
UniteWomen North Carolina
Women AdvaNCe

North Dakota

North Dakota Women's Network
UniteWomen North Dakota

Ohio

Innovation Ohio
Ohio Main Street Alliance
Progress Ohio
UniteWomen Ohio
YWCA Steubenville
YWCA Warren

Oklahoma

UniteWomen Oklahoma

Oregon

Beaver Valley NOW
Breastfeeding Coalition of Oregon
Family Forward Oregon
Oregon Action
UniteWomen Oregon

Pennsylvania

Keystone Progress
National Council of Jewish Women - Pennsylvania Policy Advocate
PathWays PA
Pennsylvania Breastfeeding Coalition
Pennsylvania Working Families
Restaurant Opportunities Center of Philadelphia
Southwestern Pennsylvania Coalition of Labor Union Women
The Women and Girls Foundation of Southwest Pennsylvania
UniteWomen Pennsylvania
Women's Law Project

Rhode Island

UniteWomen Rhode Island

South Carolina

YWCA Of the Upper Lowlands, Inc.
UniteWomen South Carolina

South Dakota

UniteWomen South Dakota

Tennessee

National Council of Jewish Women, Tennessee State Policy Advocacy Network
Tennessee Citizen Action
UniteWomen Tennessee

Texas

National Council of Jewish Women, Texas State Policy Advocacy Network
Realize Our Potential
Texas Breastfeeding Coalition
UniteWomen Texas

Utah

The Utah Breastfeeding Coalition
UniteWomen Utah

Vermont

Community of Vermont Elders
Hunger Free Vermont
UniteWomen Vermont
Vermont Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals, Local 5221
Vermont Peace & Justice Center
Voices for Vermont's Children

Virginia

UniteWomen Virginia
Virginia Breastfeeding Task Force
Virginia Organizing

Washington

Legal Voice
UniteWomen Washington
Washington Community Action Network
Washington State Labor Council, American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)
YWCA of Spokane

West Virginia

UniteWomen West Virginia
West Virginia Breastfeeding Alliance
West Virginia Citizen Action Group

Wisconsin

9to5 Wisconsin
Citizen Action of Wisconsin
Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups
Mid-Day Women's Alliance
Milwaukee Muslim Women's Coalition
UniteWomen Wisconsin
Urban Underground
Wisconsin Jobs Now
Wisconsin Working Families Party

Wyoming

UniteWomen Wyoming

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