Why we need the FAMLI Act

Nurturing a new child, fighting cancer, caring for an aging parent – there are a handful of times when family and health must come first.

New moms and babies are healthier with extended maternity leaves, and everyone recovers better from illness when family members provide care. But too many Washington workers are forced to return to work too soon, sacrificing health and family well-being in order to pay their bills.

Investing in families pays off

- **Children and families thrive.** In the 5 states with family and medical leave insurance:
  - Mothers and fathers take longer leaves to care for their newborn children.
  - Babies are breastfed longer and get better preventative care, and moms have fewer health complications following childbirth.
  - Mothers are more likely to be working – and earning more – one year following a birth.

- **The public saves.** Families with infants are less likely to receive TANF welfare grants and receive lower amounts of other types of public assistance like food stamps in states with paid leave programs.

- **The economy prospers.** Helping working families cover the basics when a baby arrives or a health crisis strikes means local businesses keep their customers and retain good employees.

Washington’s FAMLI Act

- Provides up to 12 weeks to care for a new child or seriously ill family member, and 12 weeks for the worker’s own serious health condition

- Pays benefits of 2/3 weekly wages

- Is fully self-funded with premiums of 0.2% of pay, paid by workers and matched by employers
The federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) has allowed millions of American workers to take up to 12 weeks of family or medical leave since 1993. But FMLA doesn’t provide pay or even cover the more than 4 in 10 workers in companies with fewer than 50 employees, or who have changed jobs or worked fewer than 1,250 hours in the previous year.

Only 12% of private sector workers get paid family leave, and access to vacation and sick leave is limited. Workers already struggling with low wages – disproportionately women and people of color – are least likely to have any kind of paid leave, and simply can’t afford time off without pay.

Nearly 2 out of 3 American women who give birth are in the workforce – but the U.S. is the only major country that does not guarantee paid maternity leave.

As our population ages, more workers are caring for elderly family members. Paid family leave will improve the health and quality of life of seniors.

A proven approach

5 states have established low-cost programs that provide all employees with income when they need to take extended time off for health or family. California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island have full family and disability leave in place, while New York and Hawaii cover the worker’s disability, including conditions related to pregnancy and childbirth.

Washington adopted the beginnings of a family and medical leave insurance plan to provide new parents with up to 5 weeks of partly paid leave in 2007. But family leave as adopted then was too skimpy – and wasn’t funded. Because of the recession, the program was not implemented.

Now Washington’s Work and Family Coalition has developed an improved – and fully funded – FAMLI plan for our state. Our families have waited long enough. It’s time to pass the FAMLI Act.

“Family and medical leave would really have helped one of my employees, whose wife had stomach surgery. He had to juggle her care, looking after his three kids, and working enough hours to keep them afloat. The cost of family and medical leave is insignificant compared to the cost of not having a system like this.”

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