

May 17, 2023

Dear Member of Congress:

Thirty years ago, President Clinton signed the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which established that some (but not all) workers could take unpaid, job-protected leave to care for themselves or some (but not all) of their family members. It was the first, and so far only, permanent national law protecting workers needing time to care.

In 1993, FMLA provided a critical victory as the first federal law establishing that serious illness, injury, and caretaking shouldn't cost a worker their job or health insurance. In 2023, FMLA excludes 40 percent of the workforce, and many who are eligible cannot take the time they need because they can't afford to be without pay. The law's narrow definition of family leaves out many who need time to care for a loved one.

The greatest way to honor this anniversary of the FMLA would be to prioritize the passage of the FAMILY Act and the Healthy Families Act in this Congress.

Family Values @ Work (FV@W) and our movement network grew from the reality that valuing caregiving and enabling people to be good providers and family members are essential to achieving racial, gender, and economic equity. Our movement has shaped the debates around Paid Sick and Safe Days (PSSD) and Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML), engaged a wide range of partners, and guided the development of the most inclusive policies to date, and with other partners passed paid leave in 12 states including Washington, D.C., and paid sick and safe days in more than 50 jurisdictions.

Our movement has brought together more than 2,000 diverse partner organizations and engaged thousands of people affected by the lack of paid family and medical leave (PFML) and paid sick and safe days (PSSD). We fight for these issues because we know the building blocks of upward economic mobility—job retention, raises, promotions, and asset development—depend on access to paid family and medical leave, and paid sick and safe days.

We know from experience that without prioritizing accessibility, affordability, and adequate duration of leave, these policies will not meet the needs of millions of Americans.

The FAMILY Act and Healthy Families Act both build upon our collective experience and expertise in standing up programs in the state and will lead to essential outcomes for families to thrive. We are proud to support the FAMILY Act and want to emphasize these key policy

provisions that we know are foundational to creating an equitable paid family and medical leave program, paid leave is ATTAIN-able:

- Accessible to all workers in all types of jobs and all types of families
 - Be equitable in its impact, especially considering the needs of low-wage, BIPOC, female, LGBTQ, part-time, and nontraditional workers;
 - Use the gold standard inclusive family definition of blood or affinity
- Time enough to meet care needs for self and loved ones
 - Maintain a **minimum** of 12 permanent weeks of leave.
- Tiered wage replacement ensures low-wage workers can afford to take leave
 - Make benefit amounts progressive and affordable. Benefits should start at no less than 85% replacement of usual wages for the lowest earners. This ensures that all workers can afford to use the benefit
- Accountable to the public through public administration and oversight
 - *Public agencies by nature are accountable to and serve the public.* They have built-in systems to course correct and improve services. Public agencies answer to elected officials, are experienced with stakeholder advisory committees, and have other means of direct public input.
- Insures that workers can return to their jobs
 - Without ensuring that workers' jobs are secure, it removes the ability to take paid leave with confidence
- Never steals from Social Security or other earned benefits, or turns back the clock on state innovations

We are also proud to support the Healthy Families Act and want to emphasize these key policy provisions that we know are foundational to creating an equitable paid sick and safe day policy:

- Covering all reasons for paid sick time including recovery from illness, recovery from sexual or domestic violence, access to preventive care, or looking after a sick child or other family members.
- Utilizing a family definition that is inclusive and reflects the realities of modern American families
- Ensuring that workers are guaranteed their regular salary while taking leave, and that leave is calculated by a simple formula.

We look forward to working with this Congress to champion guaranteed paid family and medical leave, paid sick and safe days, and all of the policies we know create shared prosperity for working people including affordable child care, living wages, and access to healthcare. The families we represent literally cannot afford anything less than a comprehensive paid leave program. Together, we can transform the nation's care economy.

Sincerely,

National Partners

Family Values @ Work

9to5 - National Association of Working Women

Arizona

Corazón Arizona

Poder Latinx, Arizona Chapter

California

California Work & Family Coalition

Colorado

9to5 - National Association of Working Women, Colorado Chapter

Connecticut

Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)

District of Columbia

DC Jobs with Justice

Jews United for Justice

Many Languages One Voice (MLOV)

Florida

Poder Latinx, Florida Chapter

Georgia

9to5 - National Association of Working Women, Georgia Chapter

Hawaii

Hawai'i Children's Action Network

Illinois

Women Employed

Maine

Maine Women's Lobby Education Fund

Maryland

Jews United for Justice

Massachusetts

Coalition for Social Justice

Nevada

Make It Work Nevada

New Jersey

CATA - The Farmworker Support Committee

Family Voices NJ

NJ Citizen Action

New Jersey Coalition to End Domestic Violence

New Jersey Time to Care Coalition

SPAN Parent Advocacy Network

Wind of the Spirit, Immigrant Resource Center

New York

Citizen Action of New York

North Carolina

NC Families Care Coalition

North Carolina Justice Center

Oregon

Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon

Basic Rights Oregon

Family Forward Oregon

Unite Oregon

Pennsylvania

The Restaurant Opportunities Center of Pennsylvania (ROC PA)

Texas

Workers Defense Project

Washington

Economic Opportunity Institute

Wisconsin

9to5 - National Association of Working Women, Wisconsin Chapter