

Paid Leave Means a Stronger Alaska



FACT SHEET /// FEBRUARY 2025

Most working people in the United States do not have paid family leave through their jobs, including about 75 percent — about 261,000 workers — in Alaska.¹ Even unpaid leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act is inaccessible for 68 percent of Alaskans.² The lack of paid leave has devastating costs for Alaskans and their families and for the entire state's economy by shrinking the workforce and lowering productivity, cutting workers' incomes and harming public health amid a scarcity of reproductive and maternal health care.

ALASKA'S ECONOMY AND FAMILIES ARE SUFFERING

Impossible choices between work and family are hurting Alaska's economy — and this country's economy overall — leaving millions of workers suffering. **Paid leave means people — especially women — aren't forced to leave the labor force to care for their families or health.**

- If women in Alaska participated in the labor force at the same rate as women in countries with paid leave, there would be an estimated 8,000 additional workers in the state and \$360 million more wages earned statewide annually.³
- Nationally, if women participated in the U.S. labor force at the same rate as in Germany and Canada, our economy would have benefited from more than \$6.7 trillion in additional economic activity over the past decade.⁴
- Each year, Alaskans are unable to take 32,000 leaves that they need and lose \$118 million in wages due to unpaid or partially paid leave, including \$65 million lost by women.⁵
- Nationwide, 79 percent of small business owners support a national paid leave program.⁶ Paid leave improves employee retention, morale and productivity, reducing turnover for employers of all sizes and boosting the economy. But small employers often cannot provide the benefit — and universal paid leave would help them do that.⁷

PEOPLE IN ALASKA BOTH WORK AND PROVIDE CARE

Everyone benefits from paid leave. **Paid leave means all workers can take time off to provide the care their families need.**

- In 67 percent of all Alaska households with children — more than 110,000 homes — all parents report to work, and about 9,400 children are born in Alaska each year.⁸

- » Women's wages support their households. State-level data is limited, but nationally 79 percent of Black mothers, 64 percent of Native American mothers, 49 percent of Latina mothers, 48 percent of white mothers and 43 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander mothers are key breadwinners.⁹
- » Women make up nearly half of Alaska's labor force (47 percent) and more than one-quarter of its business owners (26 percent).¹⁰
- » More than 80 percent of men believe that men and women should share care responsibilities equally,¹¹ but men only make up about 40 percent of caregivers for disabled and older adults.¹² Men want to participate more in caregiving, but unsupportive policies and stigma hold them back.¹³

THE STATE'S CAREGIVING NEEDS ARE GROWING

Families' caregiving needs are increasing in Alaska. **Paid leave means older adults and disabled people can give and receive care, and our care workforce is more resilient.**

- » More than one-fifth of Alaska workers are 55 and older,¹⁴ and in the next 25 years, the number of Alaskans who are 65 and older will grow by 16,000.¹⁵
- » Nationwide, nearly one third of all adults aged 55-64 — and 41 percent of older Black women and 43 percent of older Latinas — hold a physically demanding job.¹⁶ These jobs can worsen or cause serious medical conditions that require care, particularly in older workers and workers with disabilities.¹⁷
- » If they need care, about nine out of ten older adults would prefer to get it at home or with friends or family.¹⁸ Paid leave reduces nursing home use¹⁹ and can help recruitment and retention of care workers.²⁰
- » Paid leave helps family caregivers and disabled people (who are often caregivers themselves) manage their health and care needs while maintaining their income and employment.²¹

A NATIONAL PAID LEAVE PLAN IS THE SOLUTION

Alaskans need a common sense, national paid leave program. We recommend one that:

- includes all workers, no matter where they live or work or what kind of job they have;
- replaces enough income that workers at any income level can afford leave;
- provides enough time and covers the range of major needs workers face, including addressing their own health conditions, caring for seriously ill, injured or disabled family members and welcoming newborn, newly adopted or foster children;
- provides education and outreach to ease implementation for workers and small businesses;
- has a sustainable funding source that is affordable for workers, employers and the government without harming other essential programs.

National paid family and medical leave means a stronger economy, healthier families and businesses, and greater equality for all women and families.

To learn more, visit NationalPartnership.org/PaidLeave.

- 1 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023, September). *National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2023 (Excel tables)*. Retrieved 19 September 2024, from <https://www.bls.gov/ebs/publications/employee-benefits-in-the-united-states-march-2023.htm> (Percent of civilian workers who have access to paid family leave by Census division); U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024, November). *Current Population Survey: State Employment and Unemployment (Table 1. Civilian labor force and unemployment by state and selected area, seasonally adjusted)*. Data for October 2024, retrieved 3 December 2024, from <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/laus.t01.htm>
- 2 diversitydatakids.org. (2024, March). *Indicators of FMLA Eligibility and Affordability for Working Adults*. Retrieved 3 December 2024, from Brandeis University, The Heller School, Institute for Child, Youth and Family Policy website https://data.diversitydatakids.org/dataset?vocab_Subtopic=FMLA& ga=2.14449139.551199344.1673292061-1693714331.1656615545; Workers are considered unable to take unpaid FMLA leave because they are either ineligible based on employer size or job tenure requirements or because 12 weeks of lost wages from unpaid leave would result in their family income dropping to or below 200 percent of the Supplemental Poverty Measure.
- 3 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024). *Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Expanded State Employment Status Demographic Data (2023 Annual Averages)*. Retrieved 3 December 2024, from <https://www.bls.gov/lau/ex14tables.htm>; This analysis extends earlier Department of Labor analyses on differences in women's labor force participation. See Glynn, S. J. (2023, November). *The Cost of Doing Nothing, 2023 Update: The Price We STILL Pay without Policies to Support Working Families*. Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor Publication. Retrieved 3 December 2024, from: <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WB/paid-leave/CostofDoingNothing2023.pdf>
- 4 Frye, J., Haider, A., & Gallagher Robbins, K. (2024, September). *Unfinished Policy Agenda for Women in the Economy Cost the U.S. \$6.7 Trillion in GDP Gains over a Decade*. Retrieved 3 December 2024, from National Partnership for Women & Families website: <https://nationalpartnership.org/report/unfinished-policy-agenda-women-in-economy-cost-trillions-in-gdp/>
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- 7 National Partnership for Women & Families. (2023, November). *Paid Leave Works: Evidence from State Programs*. Retrieved 3 December 2024, from <https://nationalpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/paid-leave-works-evidence-from-state-programs.pdf>
- 8 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024, April). *National Vital Statistics Rapid Release, Births: Final Data for 2022 (Table 6. Births, by race and Hispanic origin of mother: United States, each state and territory, 2022)*. Retrieved 3 December 2024, from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr73/nvsr73-02.pdf>; U.S. Census Bureau. (2024, September). *2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (Table DP03)*. Retrieved 3 December 2024, from <https://data.census.gov/>
- 9 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 3 December 2024, 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, 64 percent of Native American mothers, 60 percent of mothers identifying as multiracial or "other" race, 49 percent of Latina mothers, 48 percent of white mothers and 43 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander mothers are key breadwinners.
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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. © 2024 National Partnership for Women & Families. All rights reserved.