Paid Leave Means A Stronger Missouri

FEBRUARY 2023

Most working people in the United States do not have paid family leave through their jobs,\(^1\) including about 80 percent — about 2.4 million workers — in Missouri. Even unpaid leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act is inaccessible for 62 percent of Missourians.\(^2\) The lack of paid leave exacerbates the state’s economic and care challenges — from the rising cost of living, to a scarcity of reproductive and maternal health care, to an aging population, with devastating costs for Missourians and their families, public health and the economy.

Impossible choices between work and family are hurting Missouri’s economy, and women suffer most. Paid leave means people — especially women — aren’t forced to leave the labor force to care for their families or health.

- If women in Missouri participated in the labor force at the same rate as women in countries with paid leave, there would be an estimated 26,000 additional workers in the state and $829 million more wages earned statewide.\(^3\)
- Nationally, if women participated in the U.S. labor force at that rate, our economy would benefit from more than $650 billion in additional economic activity each year.\(^4\)
- In Missouri, a typical worker who takes four weeks of unpaid leave loses more than $2,900 in income.\(^5\) As the cost of living rises, income loss hits families especially hard.
- 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.\(^6\)

Missourians are caught between their work and family responsibilities. Paid leave means not having to choose between job and family.

- About 69,400 children are born in Missouri each year, and in 73 percent of all Missouri households with children — more than 956,000 homes — all parents report to work.\(^7\)
- Women’s wages support their households. In Missouri, 85 percent of Black mothers, 54 percent of Latina mothers, 52 percent of white mothers and 41 percent of AAPI mothers are key family breadwinners. State-level
The state’s caregiving needs are growing

Missouri families’ care needs are increasing. Paid leave means older adults and people with disabilities can provide and receive care, and our care workforce is more resilient.

- Older workers and older adults are more likely to experience serious medical conditions that require care.¹¹
- Nearly one-quarter of Missouri workers are 55 and older,¹² and in the next 20 years, the share of Missouri’s population age 65 and older will grow by more than one-eighth.¹³
- About 32 percent of Missouri nursing homes have a shortage of direct care workers.¹⁴ Paid leave reduces nursing home utilization and can help recruitment and retention of care workers.¹⁵
- An estimated 248,000 Missourians report having long-term COVID-19 symptoms that affect their daily activities.¹⁶ Paid leave helps family caregivers and people with disabilities (who are often caregivers themselves) manage their health and care needs while maintaining their income and employment.¹⁷

Missourians 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 for workers to meet their care and health needs;
  - 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, such as Social Security or the Child Tax Credit.

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.

2 diversitydatakids.org. (2023, January). Indicators of FMLA Eligibility and Affordability for Working Adults. Retrieved 12 January 2023, from Brandeis University, The Heller School, Institute for Child, Youth and Family Policy website: https://data.diversitydatakids.org/dataset?vocab_Subtopic=FMLA&ga=2.1449139.551199344.1673292061-1693714231.1656615545; 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.


4 Ibid.


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.

© 2022 National Partnership for Women & Families. All rights reserved.