

May 10, 2011

The Honorable Denny Rehberg
Chairman
Labor/HHS Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rehberg:

We, the undersigned organizations, express our strong support for an appropriation of \$23 million for the State Paid Leave Fund within the U.S. Department of Labor. Grants made from this fund will assist states in planning, startup and outreach activities related to paid family and medical leave programs.

The State Paid Leave Fund will promote state innovation in establishing paid leave programs to meet the needs of working families.

The State Paid Leave Fund would provide competitive grants to help states launch paid leave programs by covering startup costs for information technology, staffing and program operating budgets. Federal funds could also be used for outreach, education, planning, and the research necessary to shape and implement paid leave proposals. With so many state budgets in crisis, federal funds to assist with startup costs and outreach activities are a vital ingredient for successful implementation of these critical programs.

States are leading the way with models for successful paid leave policies. California and New Jersey have successfully implemented statewide paid family leave programs to provide workers with a share of their wages for up to six weeks while they care for a family member with a serious health condition or bond with a new child. These insurance funds are paid for by employee contributions and have been used by hundreds of thousands of workers. A recent study of the California paid leave program found that after more than five years' experience with paid family leave, the vast majority of employers reported that it has had minimal impact on their business operations.¹

Nearly all workers will need to take time away from work at some point in their lives to deal with a serious personal or family illness or to care for a new child. Sixty-six million Americans—almost 30 percent of the adult population—serve as unpaid caregivers to relatives and most of them also work.² Nearly six in ten caregivers are employed, and more than seven in ten have been employed at some point while providing care.³ Yet, a meager 11 percent of workers in the United States have access to paid family leave through their employers⁴, and fewer than 40 percent have access to personal medical leave through a temporary disability program.⁵ Working families need paid, job-protected time off to ensure that they can address their health problems and meet their caregiving needs.

Working families need paid leave to care for their families without risking their economic security. For millions of families, taking time away from work to care for a family member is a necessity. Yet many cannot afford to take unpaid leave. In fact, 78 percent of workers who *need but do*

not take Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave say that they simply cannot afford to take time off without pay.⁶ Low-income workers are less likely to have access to any type of leave—yet they are the ones most in need of financial support when illness strikes or when a new child joins the family.⁷ The need for paid leave benefits is universal and such benefits must be afforded without regard to family composition.

Paid family leave also helps reduce health care costs for families and the health care system.

Studies show that sick children recover faster when cared for by their parents. The mere presence of a parent shortens a child's hospital stay by 31 percent.⁸ Active parental involvement in a child's hospital care may head off future health care needs, partly due to increased parental education and awareness.⁹

Evidence from successful state paid leave programs in California and New Jersey show that state paid leave programs strengthen economic security for working families, improve workplace stability for employers, and pump money back into the economy. Workers use paid leave to protect their financial stability and ensure their families at least a partial paycheck during an illness or birth of child. Moreover, businesses benefit from paid leave due to higher levels of worker satisfaction and retention and lower turnover. For example, research shows that women who have access to paid leave are more likely to return to work after they have a child¹⁰ and lower-wage workers who took paid leave through the California system were more likely to return to the same employer.¹¹ Working families stimulate the economic health of their communities.

When families are struggling and jobs are scarce, workers need paid family and medical leave more than ever. The State Paid Leave Fund would help states promote the financial well-being of working families. We urge you to include this important program in the FY 2012 Department of Labor budget.

Sincerely,

National Partnership for Women & Families

9to5, National Association of Working Women
AFL-CIO

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Association of University Women
(AAUW)

American Congress of Obstetricians and
Gynecologists

American Federation of State, County, and
Municipal Employees

American Public Health Association

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO

Association of University Centers on Disabilities
(AUCD)

Caring Economics Campaign, Center for
Partnership Studies

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Coalition of Labor Union Women

Coalition on Human Needs

Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism

Communications Workers of America, AFL-CIO

Community Action Partnership

Direct Care Alliance

Drum Major Institute for Public Policy

Easter Seals

Family Equality Council

Family Values @ Work Consortium

First Focus Campaign for Children

Human Rights Campaign

Interfaith Worker Justice

International Childbirth Education Association

Jobs with Justice

Labor Project for Working Families

Legal Momentum

Maternity Care Coalition

MomsRising

National Alliance for Breastfeeding Advocacy

National Alliance for Caregiving

National Association of Mothers' Centers

National Black Justice Coalition

National Coalition for LGBT Health

National Council of Jewish Women

National Council of La Raza (NCLR)

National Council of Women's Organizations

National Employment Law Project

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health

National Organization for Women

National Women's Health Network

National Women's Law Center

NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice
Lobby
NewBorn Concepts
Nursing Mothers Alliance
OWL - The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
Partnership for Working Families
RESULTS

Arizona

Central Arizonans for a Sustainable Economy
(CASE)

California

Cancer Legal Resource Center
Communications Workers of America District 9
Disability Rights Legal Center
El Centro Del Pueblo
Equal Rights Advocates
Family Caregiver Alliance National Center on
Caregiving
JERICHO a Voice for Justice
Restaurant Opportunities Center of Los Angeles
(ROC-LA)
SEIU Local 1021

Connecticut

Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition
Connecticut Permanent Commission on the Status
of Women
Southwestern Connecticut Agency on Aging

Colorado

Colorado Breastfeeding Coalition

District of Columbia

District of Columbia Breastfeeding Coalition
Family Health & Birth Center
Restaurant Opportunities Center of Washington,
DC

Delaware

Breastfeeding Coalition of Delaware

Florida

The Florida Breastfeeding Coalition (FBC)

Georgia

Easter Seals Southern Georgia, Inc.

Hawaii

Breastfeeding Hawaii

Illinois

Service Employees International Union
The Coalition for Improving Maternity Services
(CIMS)
United Auto Workers International Union,
United States Breastfeeding Committee
Voices for America's Children
Wider Opportunities for Women

Women Employed

Indiana

Indiana Black Breastfeeding Coalition

Louisiana

Acadiana Breast Feeding Coalition
Breastfeeding Awareness Network & Coalition of
Northeast Louisiana
Louisiana Breastfeeding Coalition

Massachusetts

Baby-Friendly USA, Inc.
Business and Professional Women Lower Cape Cod
Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women
Crittenton Women's Union
Eastern Massachusetts OWL Our Bodies Ourselves
Jewish Alliance for Law & Social Action (JALSA)
Massachusetts Commission on the Status of
Women
Massachusetts Disability Law Center, Inc.
Massachusetts Employment Rights Coalition
Massachusetts Paid Leave Coalition
New England Joint Board UNITE HERE
Somerville Commission for Women
The Massachusetts Chapter of the National
Organization for Women
United Auto Workers Massachusetts State CAP
Council

Maryland

Decision Research
Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition, Baby and Me
Lactation Services

Michigan

Michigan Breastfeeding Network
Monroe County Breastfeeding Collaborative

Minnesota

Fargo Moorhead Area Breastfeeding Association
Minnesota Department of Employment and
Economic Development
TakeAction Minnesota

Montana

Frontier Home Health

North Carolina

Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute
North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition
Northampton County Health Department
United States Lactation Consultant Association
(USLCA)

New Hampshire

New Hampshire Breastfeeding Task Force

New Jersey

Best for Babes Foundation
Essex County Women of Color and Allies NOW
Chapter
Family Voices – NJ
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
New Jersey Breastfeeding Coalition
New Jersey Citizen Action
New Jersey Policy Perspective
Newark Teachers Union, Local 481, AFT, AFL-
CIO
Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center New Jersey
Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network of New Jersey
Union County Division on Aging

New Mexico

Memorial Medical Center (Las Cruces, NM)
New Mexico Breastfeeding Task Force
Southwest New Mexico Breastfeeding Council

New York

A Better Balance: The Work and Family Legal
Center
Center for Children's Initiatives
Community Action of Orleans & Genesee Child
Care Resource & Referral
Make the Road New York
Mount Sinai Medical Center
New York State Breastfeeding Coalition
New York State Early Care & Learning Council
New York State Paid Leave Coalition
New York Union Child Care Coalition
Queers for Economic Justice
United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local
1500 NY
Winning Beginning NY

Ohio

Holmes County WIC

Lorain County Breastfeeding Coalition
Muskingum County WIC
Ohio Breastfeeding Alliance
The Ohio Department of Health; Ohio WIC
program

Oklahoma

Indian Capital Technology Center

Oregon

Breastfeeding Coalition of Oregon
Children First for Oregon
Family Forward Oregon
Oregon Center for Public Policy
Oregon Women's Health & Wellness Alliance

Pennsylvania

Community Action Southwest WIC Program
Jefferson Medical College/Nemours
Maternity Care Coalition
PathWays PA
Pennsylvania Breastfeeding Coalition
Pennsylvania Resource Organization for Lactation
Consultants
Private Industry Council of Westmoreland/Fayette,
Inc.
The Reading Hospital and Medical Center
United States Lactation Consultant Association
Western Pennsylvania Hospital

Puerto Rico

One Stop Career Center of Puerto Rico

Rhode Island

Rhode Island Breastfeeding Coalition
Tri-Town Community Action Agency

South Carolina

South Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition

Utah

Utah Breastfeeding Coalition

Vermont

Voices for Vermont's Children
Wellstart International

Washington

34th District Democrats
American Academy of Pediatrics, WA Chapter
Economic Opportunity Institute

National Organization for Women Washington
State Chapter and Tacoma, Washington
Chapter
Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans
Puget Sound Sage

Washington Family Leave Coalition
Wisconsin
Wisconsin Breastfeeding Coalition

¹ Appelbaum, E & Milkman, R. (2011, January). *Leaves That Pay: Employer and Worker Experiences with Paid Leave in California*. Center for Economic Policy Research. Retrieved 25 March 2011, from <http://www.cepr.net/index.php/publications/reports/leaves-that-pay>

² National Alliance for Caregiving. (2009, November). *Caregiving in the U.S.* National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP Publication. Retrieved 13 December 2010, from http://www.caregiving.org/data/Caregiving_in_the_US_2009_full_report.pdf

³ See note 2.

⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010, March). *Employee Benefits in the United States National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2010 (Table 32)*. Retrieved 13 December 2010, from <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2010/ebb10046.pdf>

⁵ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010, March). *Employee Benefits in the United States National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2010 (Table 32)*. Retrieved 13 December 2010, from <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2010/ebb10046.pdf>

⁶ Cantor, D., Waldfogel, J., Kerwin, J., et al. (2001). *Balancing the Needs of Families and Employers: Family and Medical Leave Surveys, 2000 Update*. Rockville, MD: Westat.

⁷ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010 March). *Employee Benefits in the United States National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2010 (Table 32)*. Retrieved 13 December 2010, from <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2010/ebb10046.pdf>

⁸ Heymann, J. (2001, October 15). *The Widening Gap: Why America's Working Families Are in Jeopardy—and What Can Be Done About It*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

⁹ Palmer, S. (1993). Care of sick children by parents: A meaningful role. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 18(2), 185–191. As cited in: Lovell, V. (2004). *No Time to be Sick: Why Everyone Suffers When Workers Don't have Paid Sick Leave*. Annie E. Casey Foundation, Institute for Women's Policy Research, and Ford Foundation Publication.

¹⁰ Boushey, H. (2009, June 8). *Helping Breadwinners When It Can't Wait: A Progressive Program for Family Leave Insurance*. Center for American Progress. Retrieved 4 April, 2011, from <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/06/fmla.html>

¹¹ See note 1.