Paid Leave Means A Stronger Maine

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Maine will soon be home to the fourteenth state paid family and medical leave program in the United States. Maine’s program will go fully into effect in 2026. The program will provide 12 weeks of paid leave and builds on lessons learned from older state programs, including progressive wage replacement, coverage for safe leave and an inclusive definition of “family” for family caregiving.

Mainers work and family responsibilities. Paid leave means not having to choose between job and family.

- About 12,100 children are born in Maine each year, and in 74 percent of all Maine households with children — more than 171,000 homes — all parents report to work.
- Women’s wages support their households. In Maine, 56 percent of white mothers are key family breadwinners. State-level data is limited, but nationally 79 percent of Black mothers, 64 percent of Native American mothers, 49 percent of Latina mothers and 43 percent of AAPI mothers are key breadwinners.
- Women make up nearly half of Maine’s labor force (48 percent) and more than one-quarter of its business owners (26 percent).
- Across the country, many men want to play a larger role in caring for their children, but unsupportive policies and stigma hold them back.

Maine 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.

- Nearly three in ten Maine workers are 55 and older, and in the next 20 years, the state’s population age 65 and older will grow by 38,000.
- Nationwide, nearly one third of all adults — and 41 percent of older Black women and 43 percent of older Latinas — aged 55-64 hold a physically demanding job, which may exacerbate or cause serious medical conditions that require care, particularly in older workers and workers with disabilities. In Maine, that would mean 39,500 older workers.
- Paid leave reduces nursing home utilization and can help recruitment and retention of care workers.
Maine’s paid leave program strengthens the state

- An estimated 144,000 Mainers report having long-term COVID-19 symptoms that affect their daily activities. Paid leave is a critical support as we continue through this mass disabling event, which disproportionately impacts women, people of color and workers with low incomes.
- 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.

Mainers will soon see the benefits of paid leave for workers, families and businesses. Paid leave means people – especially women – aren’t forced to leave the labor force to care for their families or health, reducing turnover for employers of all sizes and boosting the economy.

- Paid leave helps improve health outcomes and helps working people remain economically secure and stay connected to their jobs.
- Businesses’ employee retention can also improve significantly with paid leave, helping to strengthen bottom lines.
- State programs are used as intended by workers without overburdening employers.

Maine will soon add to the growing body of evidence that paid leave programs work – a common sense, tested approach that works for families, businesses and economies. But people’s access to paid leave shouldn’t depend on where they live or work or what job they hold. The United States needs a common sense, national paid leave program 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


9 Ibid.


16 Ibid.

17 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.

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