



POLICY Rx: Ensure Paid Family and Medical Leave

At some point, nearly everyone needs time away from work to recover from a serious illness, care for a sick loved one or a new child. Yet the majority of working people in the United States cannot take the leave they need without risking their job or economic security.

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)– the primary federal law designed to help working people meet the dual demands of job and family – leaves out 40% of the nation's workforce and guarantees only unpaid leave, which millions of workers cannot afford to take. Only 11% of the U.S. workers have access to paid family leave through their employers. That means millions of workers are forced to choose between what is best for them and their families and income they need to cover expenses.

Why is Ensuring Paid Family and Medical Leave Important to Women?

Women are disproportionately affected. Women make up approximately half the US workforce but are still far more likely than men to be the primary caregivers for children or other family members in need of care. This dynamic is especially problematic for low wage workers, who are far less likely to have access to paid family or medical leave. 2/3 of low wage workers are women and are rarely in an economic situation where they can afford to take unpaid leave.

What Wisconsin Can Do

Despite the ongoing inaction from Congress regarding paid family and medical leave, several states have enacted state insurance programs that provide workers with access to paid family and medical leave. Similar legislation was introduced in [Wisconsin](#) during the [2017-2018](#) legislative session. If enacted, Paid Family and Medical Leave in Wisconsin could do the following:

- make all Wisconsin workers eligible for up to 12 weeks of paid leave for personal or family illness, or to care for a new child;
- provide job protection for workers who take leave for an eligible reason;
- provide income replacement between 66% of wages for most workers and up to 95% of wages for those with lower incomes;
- provide 2.6 million workers with paid leave insurance coverage through an employee contribution of between \$2 - \$3.50/week;
- and, expand the definition of eligible family members for whom an employee could take paid leave to care for.

For more information and for opportunities to get involved, visit: paidleaveforwi.org

Take Action Now:

Contact your legislators and urge them to support paid family leave in Wisconsin.