

## Learning about Legislation #50 - Paid Family and Medical Leave

### H.R. 1185: FAMILY Act - to provide paid family and medical leave benefits

This bill was introduced by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D - Conn.) and it is pending in the House Ways and Means Committee. Our allies at the organization [Family Values @ Work](#) explain why this bill is so important:

Across the country, workers and businesses have realized that access to paid family and medical leave is key to managing the demands of job and family. But only 19% of workers have paid family and medical leave through their jobs. That reality is changing with the passage of statewide paid family and medical leave laws. 8 states and Washington DC now have paid family and medical leave, and several more (including PA!) are working on legislation. But for everyone to truly have access, we need a national program.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. DeLauro, made the following [statement](#) in support of her bill earlier this year. She said:

The FAMILY Act sets out the gold standard for paid leave for working people. It would ensure that millions of families that cannot afford to lose several weeks' worth of wages in order to care for an ill loved one or the birth of a child never have to make that impossible choice. Any proposal that stops short at parental leave only, does not cover at least up to 12 weeks, does not have a stable financing mechanism, or delays workers' Social Security benefits, is insufficient and will not actually help workers. We can do much better for the people of this country, and we must. That is why I will keep fighting until the FAMILY Act is the law of the land.

First introduced in 2013, the FAMILY Act would:

- Provide up to 12 weeks of partial wages to working people who need to take time away from their jobs to address a serious personal or family health issue, to care for a newborn or newly adopted child, or for circumstances arising from a loved one's military deployment or serious injury;
- Be self-funded through payroll contributions from employers and employees of just two-tenths of 1% each (two cents per \$10 in wages), or about \$4 a week total, split between employers and employees;
- Guarantee portable coverage so that workers who have multiple jobs, change jobs, or are self-employed are provided with the same security as traditional employees; and
- Provide 66% wage replacement, capped at \$4,000 a month.

Rep. Richard Neal, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, has also spoken out on behalf of paid family and medical leave programs. He made this [statement](#) to his committee:

No one should be forced to choose between caring for a loved one or dealing with a serious medical condition and paying their bills, but American working families face this choice all too frequently. Nearly all workers will need to take time away from work at some point to deal with serious personal health issues, to care for a family member, or to welcome a new child. But for middle-class workers, especially those on the lower end of the pay scale, taking unpaid leave makes it impossible to make ends meet. Other struggles without income for short periods of time then cut into these opportunities, and we simply see families that can't afford to take any leave from their responsibilities...

Lack of paid leave doesn't mean just harm to workers and their families; it also makes it difficult for employers to recruit and retain good workers. Many small business owners would like to provide paid leave, but can't without the backstop of a state or federal program. And the lack of access to paid leave hurts our economy by forcing talented, hard-working people to take a step back in their careers or drop out of the labor force entirely.

This is a problem. It is only going to grow. The most common reason that workers take leave today is to deal with their own serious medical conditions while remaining attached to the labor force. The population is aging, and the Department of Health and Human Services estimates that about half of Americans turning 65 today will develop a disability serious enough to require care. This means that the number of American workers who need personal medical leave and the number of American workers who need leave to care for aging parents, spouses, and other family members is only going to increase.