

Top 10 Reasons Why Hawai'i Needs Paid Family Leave

FACT SHEET #2

1. Current Policies are Failing Many of Hawai'i's Families

Under the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), eligible workers in businesses with 50 or more employees can access job protected **unpaid** leave for family and medical reasons. Some states, including Hawai'i, have their own medical and family leave laws. The Hawai'i Family Leave Law (HFLL) provides job protected leave for up to four weeks but the leave is also **unpaid** and is not available to all employees. Through the Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) Program in Hawai'i, employees can take limited **paid** leave to care for their own sickness or injury. However, **TDI does not allow time off to care for family members.**

What is Paid Family Leave?

*Paid family leave provides **job protection and wage replacement** when employees need to take time off to care for a new child or a family member with a serious illness.*

2. Demographics of the Paid Labor Force are Changing

Women make up about half of the labor force in Hawai'i and more women with children under six years old are in the workforce than ever before. The majority of single parents work and in over half of married couple families, both parents work. In addition, many older adults continue working due to concerns about economic security. In Hawai'i, about 31% of adults 60 years and older participate in the labor force. Working parents and older employees need paid family leave to be able to address family members' health needs.

3. Paid Family Leave Improves Children's Health

Children's health improves when parents can take time off work to bond with and care for a new child without worrying about reduced income. Increased access to paid family leave is linked with higher birthweight, longer periods of breastfeeding, and reduced infant mortality. Paid family leave also increases fathers' involvement in children's lives. Research further shows that recovery is quicker and hospital stays are shortened when parents have adequate time to care for seriously ill children.

4. Paid Family Leave Supports Family Economic Wellbeing

New parents are less likely to lose their jobs or drop out of the labor force when they have paid family leave, which helps ensure financial stability for families. New mothers who take paid family leave remain connected to the workforce and are more likely to experience wage increases after a child's birth. Parents who take paid family leave are also less likely to rely on public assistance after the birth of a child.

Balancing Work and Family Life

*Nearly all workers need to take time away from work at some point to care for a new child or a seriously ill family member. Employees in Hawai'i do not have any legal right to paid family leave, and most cannot take unpaid leave and still maintain financial stability given the high cost of living in our state. A paid family leave program that is **available to everyone**, regardless of where they work, can provide families with job protection and the flexibility to meet their needs without losing pay.*

5. Hawai'i's Older Population is Growing

As the population of people age 65 and older in Hawai'i continues to increase, so does the demand for caregiving. It is not uncommon for Generation X families to face the combined pressure of caring for their children and aging parents and relatives. Many older people rely on their adult children to care for them during a medical crisis, which creates financial strain on employees who lose income or risk their job to temporarily care for a sick parent.

6. Paid Family Leave Supports Vulnerable Populations

Low wage workers and single parents may be at a particular disadvantage in the absence of paid family leave. Low wage workers are more likely to risk financial hardship or job loss by taking unpaid leave from work. Many single parents may not be able to afford to take unpaid time off work for similar reasons.

7. Paid Family Leave Works in Other States

Data from states that successfully implemented paid family leave confirm that concerns about negative impacts on businesses are unfounded. Employers in California, for example, report positive effects of the program on employee productivity, performance, and profits. Paid family leave programs also reduce turnover and increase employee loyalty, saving businesses the cost of replacing workers. Studies show that workers do not abuse paid family leave and, on average, take less than the maximum time allowed.

What Paid Family Leave Could Look Like in Hawai'i

Paid family leave in Hawai'i could:

- **Be employee-funded through a small monthly payroll deduction (just a few dollars)**
- **Provide wage replacement**
- **Be available to all employees regardless of where they work**

8. Paid Family Leave Stimulates Business and the Economy

Paid family leave not only keeps workers in the labor force and promotes family economic security, it also helps businesses thrive with a stable workforce that further contributes to the economy. Over time, paid family leave can contribute to our state's economic productivity and growth.

9. Hawai'i Should Lead the Nation

The U.S. is the only industrialized country without a paid family leave program for the working population. Without a federal paid family leave program, many employees in Hawai'i lack protection from job loss and financial strain during needed time away from work to care for a new child or family member. By implementing paid family leave, Hawai'i can join other states that have enacted successful programs – including California, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and New York – and lead the nation.

10. People Want Paid Family Leave

Public opinion polls show that the vast majority of Americans are in favor of paid family leave policies.

What You Can Do

Learn more about how paid family leave can support Hawai'i's families. Join the campaign for paid family leave policy. Visit the Hawai'i Children's Action Network at http://www.hawaii-can.org/paid_family_leave, Hawai'i KIDS COUNT at uhfamily.hawaii.edu/, or the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women at <http://humanservices.hawaii.gov/hscsw/>.

