

Connecticut General Assembly



PCSW

Permanent Commission on the Status of Women

The State's leading force for women's equality

News Release

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The Case for Paid Family and Medical Leave

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Quotes on Why Paid Family and Medical Leave is Important

From Carolyn Treiss, Executive Director, Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), a research and public policy arm of the Connecticut General Assembly:

“Women make up nearly half the workforce, and yet still bear the brunt of the responsibility for caring for their families in a time of illness. And women do most of the caregiving for aging parents – a population we know is causing a serious demographic shift. This sets women back professionally, in terms of earnings; as well as personally, because time off from work results in fewer assets in retirement. And since more and more women are becoming the major or sole household breadwinner, paid leave would help increase the financial security of families, too.”

From Catherine Bailey, Legal & Public Policy Director, Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF), a non-profit with expertise in family law, sex discrimination in employment and education, hate crimes and LGBT civil rights:

“While the Campaign for Paid Family Leave appreciates the work of the Task Force in studying the critical issue of paid family and medical leave, we urge Connecticut's leaders to implement a wage replacement system that will truly benefit workers when they need it the most. To bring workplace policies into the 21st century, we recommend an employee-funded system where eligible employees receive a minimum of 12 weeks' pay at 75% of their wages with measures to ensure workers can return to their jobs.”

From Sal Luciano, Executive Director, Council 4 AFSCME, a union representing 32,000 public service workers in state and local government and the private sector:

“Workers should be able to care for themselves or their loved ones without fear of losing their jobs or their homes. That should be one of the cornerstones of living in a civilized society. That's why our union supports paid family leave. It's the right thing to do, for working families and for the Connecticut economy.”

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From Susan Lloyd Yolen, Vice President, Public Policy & Advocacy, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, whose mission is to protect the fundamental right of all individuals to manage their own fertility and sexual health, and to ensure access to the services, education and information to realize that right.

“As a provider of health care and as an employer of women, Planned Parenthood is keenly aware of the responsibilities women take on as caregivers. We’re also sensitive to the fact that women often put their own health concerns last... working through illness rather than recuperating at home. Paid family leave will give women the confidence and resources to take better care of themselves (and their families).”

From Rep. Mae Flexer:

“Connecticut has the opportunity to lead the nation in catching up to the rest of the world on supporting workers and their families by enacting paid family and medical leave. It’s critical to have a minimum of 12 weeks of paid time because it gives families the flexibility to welcome a new baby, recover from their own illness, or to deal with a family medical emergency. We have to the opportunity to get this right.”

From Rep. Peter Tercyak:

“When my sister had cancer and I was helping to care for her, we took for granted our ability to take a day off from our jobs for her treatments. Only later did I find out that there is no family medical leave for siblings. My boss was that good, knew it made sense, and was good for all: me, the clinic where I worked, my sister, our family, and her medical team. Everybody deserves what my boss was kind enough to give me.”

From Ana María Rivera-Forastieri, Political Director of Connecticut Working Families:

“Workers desperately need paid family and medical leave. The recommendations from Connecticut Campaign for Paid Family Leave are critical for family caregivers and workers with long term illnesses. The last thing anyone needs to worry about when they get sick is losing their job or missing out on wages.”

From Ellen Bravo, Executive Director, Family Values @ Work, a national network of 21 state and local coalitions helping spur the growing movement for family-friendly workplace policies such as paid sick days and family leave insurance:

“In 1995, I served on the bipartisan Commission on Leave appointed by Congress to study the impact of the Family and Medical Leave Act. Despite many differences, the Commission unanimously recommended that states experiment with forms of paid family leave. Nearly 20 years later, states have been leading the way and proving that paid family leave is successful for workers, communities and businesses alike. Research from states that have already passed paid family leave legislation shows it not only boosts job retention and child health, but also has a positive or neutral impact on business. Moreover, once these insurance programs are up and running, they become self-sustaining.”

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Recommendations from The Campaign for Paid Family Leave

Connecticut has had a family and medical leave act in place since 1990, three years before Congress passed the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). These laws allow workers to take leave from work when they have a serious illness, or need to take care of an ill family member, an injured servicemember, or a new child. With only 16% of employers providing paid leave, usage of the law remains low, as most workers cannot afford to take time from work unpaid.

As Connecticut continues to investigate how a system of paid family leave might work in the state, advocates from almost 40 organizations and agencies have identified several key elements

that should be included in any paid family leave proposals to ensure that the system is fair and helps employees maintain financial security while they are out on leave to care for themselves or a loved one.

Campaign for Paid Family Leave Recommendations to “Make FMLA Work”:

- All employees, including state and municipal workers as well as private employees are eligible for paid family leave. Self-employed persons may opt in.
- In order to be eligible for paid family leave, a worker must earn \$9,300 in a 12-month base period; alternate calculation based on quarterly earnings. Earnings may be with one or multiple employers.
- Workers may use their leave for the reasons defined by CT’s Family & Medical Leave Act with the addition of caring for a sibling, grandparent or grandchild, regardless of the age of the child or grandchild.
- Employees receive 75% of their weekly earnings up to \$1,000/week.
- Employees may take up to 12 weeks of paid family leave within a 12 month period with the ability to take leave incrementally. The waiting period before using leave is 7 days.
- For those employees not covered under FMLA but contributing their wages to the fund, employees have additional job protection if they worked for their employer for 12 months have banked at least 1,000 hours during that time with the same employer.
- The system is funded solely by employee contributions and administered by the Department of Labor.
- Includes additional measures to ensure that employees are not retaliated against for using their leave.

Accessibility: For a system of paid family leave to be portable and accessible, it’s important that all employees, with an exception for those who are self-employed, are part of the system. The earnings threshold presented was selected based on a part-time worker working 20 hours a week earning minimum wage.

Expanding the definition of family member: Often times employees find themselves having to care for a seriously ill family member who is outside the definition of family member in current FMLA law. Adding sibling, grandparent and grandchild will accommodate the realistic needs of multi-generational households and enable employees to tend to the needs of their loved ones.

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Reimbursement: In order for paid family leave to be useable by most employees the reimbursement must be high enough to provide a liveable wage. This is especially important for low-wage workers.

Length of leave: 12 weeks of paid family leave mirrors Connecticut's statute, and is intended to "make FMLA work." Employees need to take leave incrementally because many people who are suffering from a health issue or who are caring for a relative want to be at work, but their demands make it difficult to work a full work day.

Job protection: Since all employees will be contributing their wages to the fund, they should also receive the benefit of job protection. This proposal is fair to both the employee and employer, because an employee must demonstrate commitment to their employer before receiving protection.

Anti-discrimination: No one should face discrimination from their employer or face retaliation for attempting to exercise their rights under the statute.

Funding: While there are strong arguments supporting the idea that both the employee and employer should pay into a system of paid family leave, based on the experiences of other states, this proposal takes into consideration the needs of small businesses.

Supporters/Members

The Campaign for Paid Family Leave is run jointly by the [CT Women's Education & Legal Fund](#) and the [Permanent Commission on the Status of Women](#). A group of diverse advocates who represent the needs of working families and adults have come together to explore how Connecticut can provide relief when an employee needs time away from work to deal with their own illness, the illness of an aging parent or loved one, or to care for a newborn.

- [AARP Connecticut](#)
- [AFSCME Council 4](#)
- [Alzheimer's Association \(CT\)](#)
- [All Our Kin](#)
- [American Cancer Society Action Network](#)
- [American Diabetes Association of CT](#)
- [Autism Speaks](#)
- [AIDS Connecticut](#)
- [Connecticut Association for Human Services \(CAHS\)](#)
- [CT Conference of United Church of Christ](#)
- [Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence \(CCADV\)](#)
- [Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition](#)
- [Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance \(CECA\)](#)
- [The CT Conference of the United Church of Christ](#)

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- [CT Sexual Assault Crisis Services \(CONNSACS\)](#)
- [Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund \(CWEALF\)](#)
- [Connecticut Working Families](#)
- [Connecticut Voices for Children](#)
- [Donate Life CT](#)
- [Greater Hartford Legal Aid](#)
- [The Jennifer Jaff Center](#)
- [Junta for Progressive Action](#)
- [League of Women Voters of Connecticut](#)
- [Legal Assistance Resource Center of CT](#)
- [MS Society \(CT\)](#)
- [NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut](#)
- [National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter](#)
- [National Organization for Women, CT Chapter \(CT-NOW\)](#)
- [New Haven Legal Assistance](#)
- [Office of the Healthcare Advocate](#)
- [Older Women's League \(OWL\)](#)
- [Permanent Commission on the Status of Women \(PCSW\)](#)
- [Planned Parenthood of Southern New England \(PPSNE\)](#)
- [UAW Region 9A CAP Council](#)

About the PCSW: The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women was formed in 1973 under Sec. 46a-1 of the Connecticut General Statutes to study and improve Connecticut women's economic security, health and safety; to promote consideration of qualified women to leadership positions and to work toward the elimination of gender discrimination. As a non-partisan arm of the General Assembly, the agency monitors, critiques and recommends changes to legislation in order to inform public policy, and assesses programs and practices in all State agencies for their effect on the state's women. The PCSW serves as a liaison between government and its diverse constituents, and convenes stakeholders, including the business, non-profit and educational communities, local governments, and the media, in order to promote awareness of women's issues.