



**NEW YORK STATE
PAID FAMILY LEAVE COALITION**

Working New Yorkers Need Paid Family Leave

Statement of Purpose~ Changing Times Demand New Solutions

Over fifty million Americans have been able to take up to 12 weeks of job-protected leave since 1993, when the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act was signed into law. This policy has been used to care for new babies, sick family members and for individuals to recover from their own serious illnesses. *But FMLA provides only unpaid leave, which means too many people still can't afford to take time off to deal with urgent family needs.* The demands on our families have changed dramatically over the past 30 years, but our workplaces have not kept pace. For many working people, taking unpaid time off is virtually impossible, no matter how serious the situation. Staying home for a limited period with a new baby or a very sick relative should not be a luxury only some people can afford. The New York State Paid Family Leave Coalition is working to change that this year.

Expanding New York's Temporary Disability Insurance and Raising the Benefit Level

The coalition is working to win at least partial pay during family leave by expanding the Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) that New Yorkers already have. This important initiative would expand New York's existing TDI program to cover a worker who needs time off to care for a newborn or bond with an adopted child, or a seriously ill family member. Workers would receive up to 12 weeks of benefits, funded through a modest increase in premiums paid within the existing TDI program. The current benefit, equal to 50 percent of a worker's average weekly wage, has been capped at \$170 a week since 1989. It is woefully inadequate for helping families make ends meet while they are temporarily unable to work. The cap should be raised to at least \$340 for both the existing disability and the new paid family leave benefits and adjusted to keep pace with the cost of living thereafter.

An Affordable Benefit

This is a very affordable benefit for both workers and businesses. Paid family leave would not increase payroll costs. The weekly benefit is covered by insurance and paid for by employees out of small deductions from their paychecks. Since employers would not have to pay workers who are on leave, the savings could be used to hire temporary help if needed. The estimated cost of raising the TDI cap to \$340 per week and adding Paid Family Leave would be very modest. Even if the entire cost of the new paid family leave benefit were paid for by employees, state studies estimate that it would cost employees less than a dollar more a week than the 60 cents already permitted under current law.

Good Business

Making it possible for working people to stay home during these crucial times makes sense for all of us. Paid Family Leave would make it economically feasible for workers to take time off, allow employers to retain valuable workers and give workers the time to attend to issues early on so that those issues don't turn into a family catastrophe later.

Good Policy

The United States is alone amongst wealthy industrial nations – and in fact one of only four countries in the world along with Liberia, Swaziland and Papua New Guinea – that does not already provide such paid leave. It's time for New York to follow California, Washington and most recently New Jersey's lead and adapt to reality of the changing demographics of the American workforce.

The New York State Paid Family Leave Coalition is a statewide organization dedicated to addressing the work/family balance through public policy. For more information, contact us at 212-226-1808 or online @ <http://www.timetocareny.org/>