

Paid leave is a racial justice issue

No one should have to choose between their job and their family

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Paid leave is critical to closing racial gaps in health and wealth. Black women and women of color are more likely to be the breadwinners for their families, so they are more likely to need paid leave – but they’re even less likely to be able to take paid leave under current policy. Paid leave will help address the maternal mortality crisis that disproportionately affects Black mothers and other mothers of color and help level the playing field for minority-owned businesses.

A statewide paid family and medical leave program would provide Delawareans with 12 weeks of paid leave to address a serious health condition, care for a family member with a serious health condition, bond with a new child, or address the impact of a family member’s military deployment or matters relating to domestic violence.

Six in ten Delawareans can’t even take unpaid leave when they need it, but even fewer Black workers can access this critical benefit.

- In Delaware, almost 60 percent of working people don’t even have access to unpaid leave.ⁱ That reality is exacerbated for low-wage workers, 93 percent of whom nationally do not have any paid leave.ⁱⁱ
- Among Black workers, 65 percent are either ineligible or cannot afford to take unpaid leave under FMLA. That number rises to 75 percent for Hispanic workers.ⁱⁱⁱ
- As a result, thousands of Delawareans are forced to leave the workforce or go without pay when they face a major medical event – like welcoming a new child to their family, caring for a loved one with a serious illness or facing one themselves.

The pandemic has taken a toll on working women, especially women of color and low-income workers who are the breadwinners in their families.

- Women have experienced a disproportionate level of job loss during the pandemic, but particularly Black and Latinx women.^{iv} In December 2020 alone, 154,000 Black

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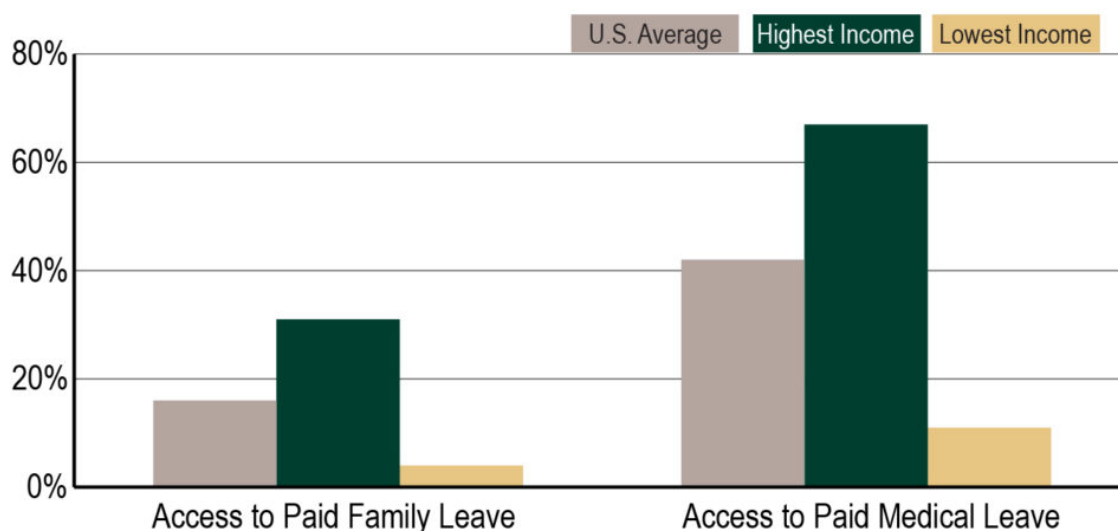
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women left the workforce, with Black and Latina women being disproportionately laid off from low-wage essential jobs.^v

- Women are the breadwinners in many Delaware households, including 82 percent of Black mothers, 48 percent of white mothers and 56 percent of Latina mothers.^{vi} For communities hit hard by COVID-19, it has meant taking unpaid time away from work to care for a loved one, resulting in tremendous hardship and lost wages.
- A study by the Economic Policy Institute found “Black workers are more likely to be in front-line jobs that are categorized as ‘essential’ – forcing them to risk their own and their families’ health to earn a living.”^{vii}

Unequal Access to Paid Family & Medical Leave

Working people with low-incomes are much less likely to be able to take paid leave for themselves or for a loved one than the highest earners.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employee Benefits Survey, March 2018.



Lack of paid leave exacerbates the crisis of Black maternal and infant mortality in Delaware and Wilmington in particular.

- Paid family and medical leave is part of a broader public health equity strategy. Black women in America are 3 times more likely to die from a pregnancy than white women^{viii}. And recent study found Black that the infant mortality rate for Black women in Wilmington, DE is three times the national average^{ix}.
- Paid parental leave has been proven to reduce infant mortality^x. For newborns and new parents, the health impact of paid leave is significant. New mothers who take maternity leave report “fewer depressive symptoms, a reduction in severe

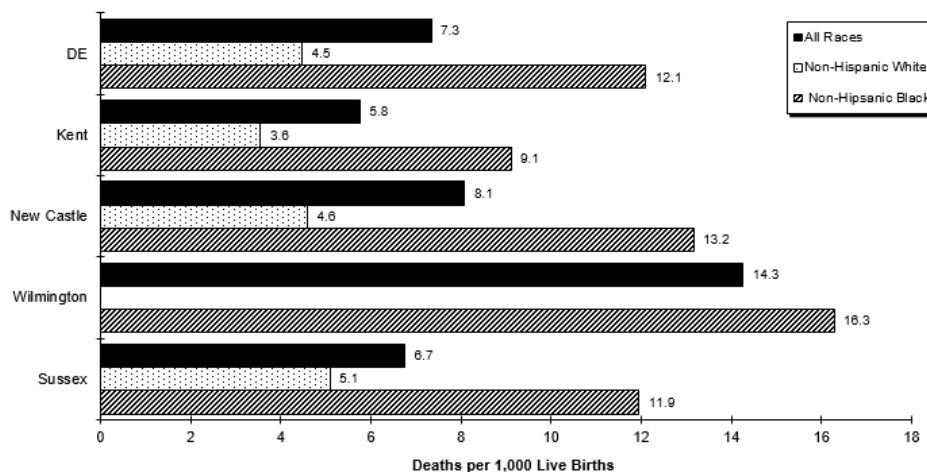
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depression, and, when the leave is paid, an improvement in overall and mental health.”

- Paid family leave is also associated with lower rates of mortality for infants and young children, a particularly important outcome considering Delaware’s high rate of infant mortality, especially among Black and Brown children in Delaware.

Figure E-2. Five-Year Average Infant Mortality Rates by Race, Delaware, Counties and the City of Wilmington, 2013-2017



Source: Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Delaware Health Statistics Center

Statewide paid leave levels the playing field for small and minority-owned businesses

- Delaware has the second highest proportion of minority-owned businesses in the nation, and the highest proportion of women minority-owned businesses.xi
- Every year, businesses lose thousands of their employees because they have to leave their job to welcome a new child or care for an ill family member. The cost of replacing employees is often astronomical.
- For smaller businesses that cannot afford to offer paid leave policies, a statewide paid leave program enables them to provide the same benefit as larger competitors, helping them attract the best talent.

The time is now. [Join our movement](#) to make Paid Family & Medical Leave a reality for every Delawarean.

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