

# **Paid leave is an economic justice issue**

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

Fact Sheet | February 2021

**Paid leave is critical to closing the wealth gap.** We see a lack in equity across the spectrum when it comes to paid family and medical leave, with the highest earners most likely to have paid leave and the lowest earners most likely to lack it. We know that low-wage workers face compounded economic pressures of balancing work, family and medical needs and obligations, and yet they are the least likely to have access to paid time off when they need it most.

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.

**Everyone will face a major medical event or emergency at one point in their life. But too many cannot afford to take leave when they need it.**

- But in Delaware, almost 60 percent of working people don't even have access to unpaid leave.<sup>i</sup> That reality is exacerbated for low-wage workers, 93 percent of whom nationally who do not have any paid leave.<sup>ii</sup>
- 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 families, especially women of color and low-income workers, highlighting the urgency for paid leave.**

- Women have experienced a disproportionate level of job loss during the pandemic,<sup>iii</sup> which could result in \$64.5 billion in lost wages nationwide.<sup>iv</sup>
- 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.<sup>v</sup> For

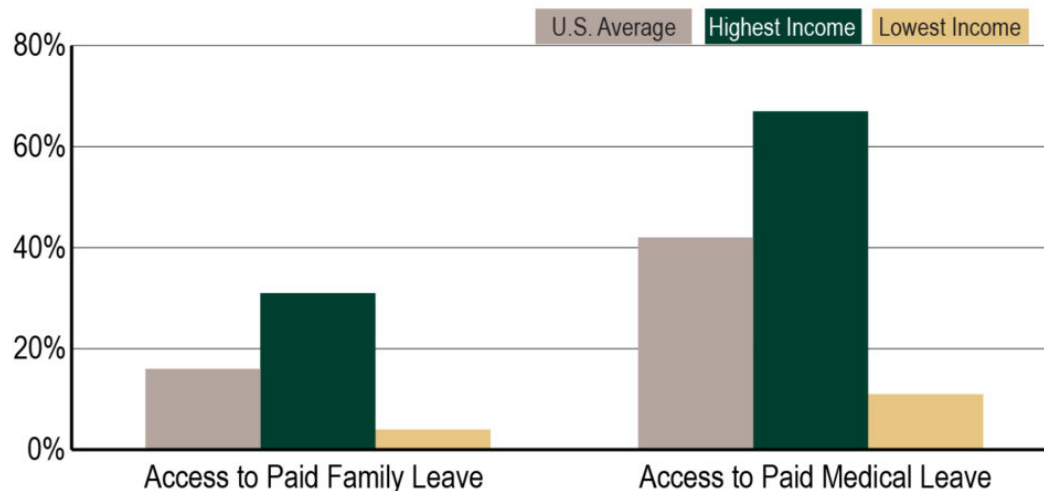
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communities hit hard by COVID-19, it has meant taking unpaid time away from work to care for a loved one, resulting in thousands of dollars in lost wages.

### 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.



- 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.”<sup>vi</sup>

## Paid Family & Medical Leave would give Delawareans the time they need to care for themselves and their loved ones.

A statewide paid family & medical leave insurance program would provide 12 weeks of paid leave for a covered purpose in a 12 month period, including:

- To address a worker’s own serious health condition
- To care for a family member with a serious health condition
- To bond with a new child (including newborn, foster and adopted children)
- To address the impact of a family member’s military deployment
- To handle legal, medical and practical matters relating to domestic violence

## Paid Family & Medical Leave is a public health priority as Delaware families face increased medical care needs

- Paid family leave is part of a broader public health equity strategy. A study of found that paid parental leave reduced infant mortality.<sup>vii</sup>

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- In the next 15 years, the share of Delaware's population age 65 and older will grow by nearly 40 percent.viii Delaware caregivers will need time to care for their family members as they age.

## **Paid Leave reduces costs for businesses and levels the playing field for small and minority-owned businesses to attract the best talent**

- 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. For many of those businesses, the cost of replacing those employees is astronomical.
- Delaware has the second highest proportion of minority-owned businesses in the nation, and the highest proportion of women minority-owned businesses.ix Paid family leave helps minority businesses stay competitive, increasing wages and strengthening our economy.
- Studies show that paid family leave policies increased the likelihood that an employee will return to the same employer after taking leave.x

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

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## References

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