

Talking Points

Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act

National Council of Jewish Women's (NCJW) Message

NCJW, guided by the Jewish value of *Kavod Ha Bri'ot*, respect and dignity for all human beings, endorses and resolves to work for laws, policies, and employment practices that allow workers to meet both family and work responsibilities. The Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act, soon to be introduced by Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), would provide twelve weeks of job-protected paid time off for employees of any company to take care of their children, spouses, parents, and themselves. **Lawmakers should pass this critical bill which would provide a necessary safety net for the nearly 60 percent of low-income workers who do not have access to paid leave benefits through their employer.**

- **The current federal leave policy is failing low-income workers.** Thirty years ago, Congress passed the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to provide unpaid, job-protected time off for millions of working people. While FMLA provides an important safety net for workers who otherwise cannot take time off work, it is inaccessible to millions of Americans who cannot afford unpaid leave. Working families currently lose about \$22.6 billion in wages each year due to a lack of access to paid leave. The FAMILY Act would reduce by 80 percent the share of families who experience financial insecurity after taking unpaid leave.
- **Paid leave is a racial justice issue.** Studies have shown that women of color play an outsized role in supporting their families. While over 80 percent of Black mothers are primary, sole, or co-breadwinners for their households, more than six in ten Black women either do not take paid leave or take leave without pay. As a result, Black women lose about \$3.9 billion each year due to lost wages while on leave according to a 2022 Center for American Progress report. Additionally, the inaccessibility of paid leave for Black women is exacerbated by existing health disparities in the US; this includes high rates of chronic illness as well as unacceptably high maternal and infant mortality rates. With access to paid leave, Black women who are ill or caring for a sick person would have both the time and economic resources to seek treatment in a timely manner.

- **National paid leave is good for businesses and the economy.** A comprehensive, national paid leave program would spread the cost of leave across all companies, reducing the burden on individual employers. Paid leave also reduces employee turnover, which allows employers to save on hiring costs. Under California's family leave insurance program, for example, workers in high-turnover industries are much more likely to return to their jobs after using the program. A national paid leave program would also allow parents and family caregivers to remain in the workforce, preventing income loss and contributing to economic productivity and growth. Without access to paid leave, workers who face serious medical or caregiving needs are unable to afford the most basic necessities.