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CONGRESSMAN DONALD PAYNE Jr., RUSH HOLT & NEW JERSEY ADVOCATES CALL FOR PASSAGE OF NATIONAL FAMILY LEAVE INSURANCE

FAMILY Act Builds on Successful New Jersey Family Leave Insurance Program

New Jersey —Elected officials, economists, business owners, and parents celebrated introduction of an affordable family leave program in Congress today, hailing the economic, health and family benefits of the [Family and Medical Leave Insurance \(FAMILY\) Act](#) and calling on New Jersey's Congressional delegation to champion these work-family protections. Coalition members expressed pride that the New Jersey Family Leave Insurance Program, enacted in 2008, has helped to inspire this national effort.

“My congratulations go out to Senator Gillibrand and Representative DeLauro for spearheading this important effort that will help both families and businesses,” **said Rep. Donald M. Payne, Jr. (NJ-10), a co-sponsor to the FAMILY Act.** “The FAMILY Act would ensure that our employment laws have caught up with the 21st Century, where employees no longer have to choose between gainful employment and caring for their families. As the father of triplets, I have witnessed the importance of medical leave time, but too many families don't have the luxury of taking unpaid leave from work to care for a newborn child or a sick parent. The FAMILY Act will provide a level of certainty to employees, which will help boost morale, make employees more productive, and increase the success of business and our economy. I am proud to be a co-sponsor of this legislation.”

The FAMILY Act, which was introduced by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) in the Senate and Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) in the House of Representatives Thursday, would create a social insurance fund to allow people to receive a portion of their pay when they need time away from their jobs for family or medical reasons – resulting in significant benefits for their families, businesses and our economy. Specifically, the bill would provide workers up to 12 weeks of paid leave for a personal serious illness, an illness of a child, parent or spouse and the birth or adoption of a child, among others. Workers and employers would each contribute a very small portion of their wages into this insurance program; the self-sustaining fund would mean workers could receive up to 66 percent of their wages while on leave.

“People want to be good parents to their children and good children to their parents, and they also want to have a job and succeed at it,” **said Jean Pierce, associate policy coordinator with the Health Professionals and Allied Employees Union.** “If you take one away to get the other, families, businesses and the economy pay the price. For most people, losing pay to meet personal or family health needs means struggling to afford even the most basic necessities, which hurts the businesses that depend on revenue from these purchases and the growth of our economy.”

“New Jersey has long recognized that it is inhumane, and even unproductive, to deny workers the ability to take care of their most basic family and medical needs. It's time to expand New Jersey's protections for family leave to the rest of the nation.” **said Rep. Rush Holt. (NJ-12)**

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) – the only federal law designed to help working people meet the dual demands of job and family – [leaves out 40 percent of the workforce](#) and guarantees only unpaid leave, which millions cannot afford. Currently only [11 percent](#) of the U.S. workers have access to paid family leave through their employers and fewer than 40 percent have personal medical leave through an employer-provided temporary disability program. That means millions of workers who develop serious health conditions, have seriously ill family members or become parents, are forced to choose between what is best for them and their families and income they need to cover basic expenses.

"When you're sick, it helps to have someone who knows your wants and your needs taking care of you," **said Permelia Toney Boss of Rahway, New Jersey.** "When I had surgery I felt afraid and alone. Having someone who really knows you and can take care of you during times like this makes a big difference. New Jersey's Family Leave Insurance program made it possible for me to have my daughter by my side to help me get better."

Policies like the FAMILY Act boost the economy by helping workers keep their families afloat during a serious illness or a birth.

"Studies of family leave insurance programs in New Jersey and California show the economic benefits of paid leave to workers, families, businesses and the community," **said Karen White, Director of the Working Families Program at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.** "The FAMILY Act will extend these economic benefits to everyone, regardless of geography."

"For my family, paid family leave meant being able to focus on my children's health needs -- born two and a half months prematurely -- rather than have to worry about putting myself and my family in significant financial hardship and debt," **said Jason, a father from West Long Branch, NJ.** "Parents will do what they need to do to give their kids a shot at a healthy start to life, but without paid family leave in NJ, for us that would have meant foregoing a paycheck to care for them while their immune systems caught up. Enacting paid family leave on the federal level is a moral choice that gives working families the flexibility and freedom to find a balance between family needs and financial realities."

[New Jersey's](#) Family Leave Insurance (FLI) Program was passed in 2008 and enacted in July 1, 2009. [California](#) became the first state to pass a Paid Family Leave (PFL) program in 2002. The programs have been enormously successful, with [1.4 million claims filed in California](#) and [138,000 filed in New Jersey](#) since their implementation, and high levels of support among business owners and workers. Now [Rhode Island](#) has joined them with a precedent-setting law that protects the jobs of all workers who need to use the fund. New York State is the next state likely to pass a family leave insurance program. Connecticut and several other states are laying the groundwork for similar legislation.

"A national family leave insurance bill would only serve to strengthen our successful law in New Jersey," **said Phyllis Salowe-Kaye, executive director of NJ Citizen Action.** "We are proud to be a state that is leading the way and paving the path for other states and for the nation to follow. As our program has shown, this is a rare win-win-win. We can protect families' health and financial stability and help businesses' bottom line." Family Leave Insurance is a true New Jersey success story, helping tens of thousands of residents take time to care for newborns or family members at no cost to the state. FLI allows most workers to take up to six weeks off to care for a new child or a sick family member. Workers are entitled to two-thirds of their weekly wages up to maximum in 2013 of \$584.

As a father, you are looked at as a 'spare part', and not really given any chance to get used to a new family," **said James Musson of Bound Brook, New Jersey.** "I don't expect to have the same benefits as the mother, who is obviously the primary caregiver, but fathers are still expected to work while dealing with sleepless nights, feedings, etc. Having family leave with the twins made me appreciate mothers more, made me spend more time with the babies than I ever was able to before and be more relaxed having this quality time with them."

There is also [broad support among the business community](#) for paid family and medical leave programs because businesses understand it's good for their bottom line. A recent Rutgers study shows that [New Jersey's FMLI](#) program has saved businesses money by improving employee retention, decreasing turnover costs, and improving productivity. California employers report that the program has had a [neutral or positive effect on employee productivity](#), profitability, and turnover, and most employers coordinate their own benefits with the state's PFL program. A 2011 study of California's FMLI program estimated that it would [save employers \\$89 million a year](#).

“New Jersey’s Family Leave Insurance program has been a huge positive for Caliper,” said Herb Greenberg, founder and CEO of Caliper Corp in New Jersey. “When you think about the cost of individuals leaving, the cost of seeking new employees, the cost of training them, etc., there is just no comparison in terms of the pure balance sheet. This policy has saved my business money. The FAMILY Act would bring these cost savings to businesses nationwide. A national family leave insurance policy is good for workers, good for businesses and good for the economy. It’s a no-brainer.”

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The New Jersey Time to Care Coalition is a member of Family Values @ Work, a network of 21 state coalitions working to pass policies that value families at work like affordable family leave. New Jersey Time to Care Coalition is a broad-based group of over 100 organizations working to support policies that strengthen communities by ensuring that working families can balance their responsibilities at home and on the job.

Listen to [New Jerseyan's personal stories](#) of how FLI has benefitted them. Read [personal stories of working people](#) across the country who benefitted from affordable family leave or suffered due to the lack of protection.