

# Paid Family and Medical Leave Would Benefit 27.5 Million Latino Workers

People across the country are working hard to make ends meet, yet they do not have the support they need to manage the demands of their jobs and obligations to their families. Even though the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides up to 12 weeks a year of unpaid leave for a worker's own serious illness; to care for a seriously ill parent, child, or spouse; for the birth of a baby; or for the adoption or foster placement of a child, it has two significant weaknesses: it does not cover all workers, and the leave offered is unpaid. This leaves nearly three-quarters (74.9%) of Latinos\* without the ability to take a paid family leave.<sup>1</sup>

## The FAMILY Act Promises Paid Family Leave for All Workers:

The Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act (S. 337/ H.R. 947 in the 115th Congress) sponsored by Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) would:

- Provide all workers with up to **12 weeks of partial income** when they take time to care for their own serious health condition; a serious health condition of a child, parent, or spouse; the birth or adoption of a child; and/or for military caregiving and leave purposes.
- Enable workers to **earn 66% of their monthly wages**; ensuring that low-and middle-income workers have a higher share of their wages replaced.
- **Cover workers in all companies**, no matter their size. Younger, part-time, lower-wage, contingent, and self-employed workers would be eligible for benefits.
- **Be funded by small employee and employer payroll contributions** of less than \$2.00 per week.

\* The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race.

## 27.5 Million Latinos Would Benefit from the FAMILY Act:

Latinos have the highest labor force participation rate (66%) of any racial or ethnic group, but they are concentrated in low-wage jobs which do not provide paid leave or paid family leave.<sup>2</sup> Yet, 23% of Latinos reported needing family or medical leave in the past two years.<sup>3</sup> The FAMILY Act would remedy this problem by:

- **Strengthening families' economic independence.** Working families lose an estimated \$20.6 billion in wages each year due to lack of access to paid family leave.<sup>4</sup> The FAMILY Act would cut the share of families who fall into poverty after taking unpaid leave by 75% under the FMLA.<sup>5</sup>
- **Supporting improved health outcomes for children.** Studies have found that paid family leave can contribute to fewer infant deaths; higher rates of breastfeeding, well-baby care, and immunizations; longer parental lifespan; improved mental health; and increased long-term achievements for children.<sup>6</sup>
- **Reducing the burden on employers.** In California, where a family leave insurance program has existed for more than a decade, workers in low-wage, high-turnover industries are much more likely to return to their jobs after using the program, and nine-out-of-ten businesses report positive or neutral effects on profitability and productivity.<sup>7</sup>

## Endnotes

- 1 UnidosUS calculations from the American Time Use Study using IPUMS Time Use data.
- 2 UnidosUS, U.S. Employers Add 312,000 Jobs in December (Washington, DC: UnidosUS, 2019), [http://publications.unidosus.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/1912/ljr\\_january2019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://publications.unidosus.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/1912/ljr_january2019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y) (accessed January 29th, 2019); And U.S. Census Bureau, "Employed Persons by occupation, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex," Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey. Washington DC, 2019. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat10.htm> (accessed January 29th 2019).
- 3 Juliana Menasce Horowitz et al., Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ of Specific Policies (Washington DC: Pew Research Center, 2017), <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/03/22152556/Paid-Leave-Report-3-17-17-FINAL.pdf> (accessed January 29th, 2019).
- 4 Sarah Jane Glynn and Danielle Corley, The Cost of Work-Family Policy Inaction (Washington DC: Center for American Progress, 2016), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2016/09/22/143877/the-costof-inaction> (accessed January 29th, 2019).
- 5 Joshi, P., Earle, A., & Baldiga, M. "Data-for-Equity Pipeline: Family and Economic Security." Available from the National Partnership for Women & Families upon request.
- 6 Brigid Schulte et al., Paid Family Leave: How Much Time is Enough? (Washington DC: New America, 2017), <https://www.newamerica.org/better-life-lab/reports/paid-family-leave-how-much-time-enough/infant-and-child-health-and-wellbeing/> (accessed January 21st, 2019).
- 7 Ruth Milkman and Eileen Appelbaum, Unfinished Business: Paid Family Leave in California and the Future of U.S. Work-Family Policy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013)