



May 21, 2026

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the members and supporters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I urge you to cosponsor the Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act (S. 2823), which would create a national paid leave program. Such a program would not only help workers but also benefit families, businesses, and our nation's economy.

Paid Time Off is Urgently Needed. The current system is failing workers who need to take time off – 73% do not have access to paid family leave to care for their loved ones, and 58% do not have access to temporary disability leave to care for themselves when facing serious health issues.¹

FMLA is Not Enough. The job-protected unpaid leave provided under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) covers only 56% of the workforce, leaving behind workers employed by small businesses, who do not work enough hours, and/or have not worked for their employer for a sufficient period.² Even if workers qualify, some cannot afford to take unpaid leave as costs outpace earnings.³ The lack of a national paid leave program forces many Americans to make the difficult choice between addressing health concerns and protecting their financial security.

Lack of Access Disproportionately Harms Women. Inability to access paid leave harms women and people of color the most. Women shoulder an unfair caregiving burden due to societal norms, increasing their likelihood of needing leave, regardless of whether it's paid or unpaid. In states without paid leave programs, women of color are disproportionately unable to take unpaid FMLA leave: 42% of the leave needed by Native American women, 38% needed by Black women and Latinas, 34% needed by white women, and 32% needed by Asian women are not taken.⁴

National Paid Leave is the Solution. The creation of a federal paid leave program would support workers, families, and the economy. It would reduce overall economic insecurity, increase workforce participation and retention, improve the health outcomes of both children and adults, and protect retirement funds.⁵ Paid leave would add \$775 billion per year to the U.S. GDP through the increased participation of women in the labor force at similar rates to other

¹ Mason, J. (2025, September 25). *As Voters Demand It, Paid Sick Days Access Expands But 25 Million Workers Still Left Out*. National Partnership for Women & Families. <https://nationalpartnership.org/voters-demand-paid-sick-days-access-expands-25-million-workers-still-left-out/>

² *Key Facts: The Family and Medical Leave Act*. (2026, January). National Partnership for Women & Families. <https://nationalpartnership.org/report/fmla-key-facts/>

³ Coan, T. (2026, May 20). *Families Can't Afford to Go Without Paid Leave*. National Partnership for Women & Families. <https://nationalpartnership.org/families-cant-afford-to-go-without-paid-leave/>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ National Partnership for Women & Families. *The Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act*. Fact Sheet. 2025. <https://nationalpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/family-act-fact-sheet.pdf>.



developed countries.⁶ Moreover, nearly eight in ten small business owners across party lines support paid leave plans like the FAMILY Act.⁷

FAMILY Act = Equitable Access to Paid Leave for All. The FAMILY Act would provide a comprehensive solution by creating a national program that helps workers stay financially secure while meeting essential caregiving needs and responsibilities. It would:

- Provide workers with up to 12 weeks of partial income replacement when they take time off for serious health conditions or caregiving purposes.
- Enable the lowest-paid workers to earn up to 85% of their regular wages, with the typical full-time worker earning around two-thirds of their wages.
- Cover workers in all companies, including those self-employed and working part-time.
- Expand the definition of “family” to ensure a broader range of caregiving relationships are covered, not only for a parent, child, or spouse, but also for extended family members such as step-parents, in-laws, grandparents/grandchildren, and domestic partners.
- Allow states with existing paid leave programs to continue administering them.
- Establish a new Office of Paid Family and Medical Leave within the Social Security Administration to oversee the administration of the program.

Your constituents need paid leave now. On their behalf, **we urge you to cosponsor the FAMILY Act** (S. 2823) by contacting Anna Song (anna_song@gillibrand.senate.gov) in Sen. Gillibrand’s office. Cosponsorship and votes associated with this legislation may be scored in the AAUW Action Fund *Congressional Voting Record* for the 119th Congress. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202-728-3300 or kissellm@aauw.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Meghan Kissell".

Meghan Kissell
Senior Director, Policy & Member Advocacy

⁶ Glynn, S. J. (2023). *The Cost of Doing Nothing, 2023 Update: The Price We STILL Pay without Policies to Support Working Families*. Women’s Bureau, United States Department of Labor. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6536b8dab487e203ecaa28ae/t/67c7b3ff09741d60c3f6fc6c/1741140991792/Th+e+Cost+of+Do>

⁷ *Small Businesses Support a National Paid Family and Medical Leave Program*. (2024, October). National Partnership for Women & Families. <https://nationalpartnership.org/report/small-businesses-support-national-paid-family-medical-leave-program/>