



New Jersey Time to Care Coalition

Email: info@njtimetocare.org

Website: www.njtimetocare.org

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CONTACT: Yarrow Willman-Cole, yarrow@work.rutgers.edu, 973-368-5112

FAMILIES AND BUSINESS OWNERS CELEBRATE FIVE YEARS WITH SUCCESSFUL PAID FAMILY LEAVE INSURANCE POLICY

N.J. Working Moms and Business Owners Return from First-Ever White House Summit on Working Families Where Policy Was Highlighted as a Model

New Jersey - Five years after New Jersey instituted a family leave insurance program that ensures residents are able to afford to care for family members when needed, economists, parents, business owners and elected officials are declaring the policy a success. The N.J. paid family leave insurance program allows workers to take up to six weeks of paid leave to care for new babies, seriously ill relatives. It is paid for by a low employee deduction of no more than 60 cents a week.

At the June 23 First White House Summit on Working Families, where community leaders from across the country discussed how local and state family-friendly workplace policies are spreading at [a record pace](#), the New Jersey policy was held up as a model for other states – and for a national policy. The [FAMILY Act](#), which would establish a national paid family and medical leave insurance program, has been introduced in Congress and has support from several N.J. cosponsors.

“The bottom line is 21st-century families deserve 21st-century workplaces. And our economy demands them, because it’s going to help us compete. It’s going to help us lead. And that means paid family leave, especially paid parental leave,” [remarked President Obama](#) at the White House Summit on Working Families. “There is only one developed country in the world that does not offer paid maternity leave, and that is us. And that is not the list you want to be on by your lonesome. It’s time to change that, because all Americans should be able to afford to care for their families.” He went on to bring attention to the states that have taken a lead, saying, “We’ve got states who are setting a good example. California, Rhode Island, and New Jersey all gave workers paid family leave.”

Research by Rutgers Center for Women and Work shows high approval rating among New Jersey working families. The report, [Policy in Action: New Jersey’s Family Leave Insurance Program at Age Three](#), highlights the program’s success in providing critical financial security to see them through many of their most significant life-changing events, and documents high levels of approval among New Jersey residents.

“Most of my family have the type of jobs that if you don’t go to work, you don’t get paid. So even though I was sick and my daughter wanted to be with me, I had to recover on my own,” says Permelia Toney-Boss, who is in remission from two types of cancer. Permelia and her daughter Tahearra were at the White House Summit to share the benefits of the policy. “When I was diagnosed the second time, the New Jersey paid family leave insurance was in effect. Tahearra was able to be with me during my recovery. It strengthened my spirit and my healing.”

[Jason Butkowski](#) had twin babies who were born severely prematurely, at 28 weeks, and spent over two months in a neo-natal intensive care unit. Doctors warned that it would be a health risk to place the babies in childcare before six months. Under N.J.'s new paid family leave program, Jason was able to take leave once his wife had exhausted her own. Today, his children are happy and healthy. "If we didn't have access to paid family leave, it would have been incredibly hard to do," he says.

[A new report](#) by independent economists Eileen Appelbaum and Sharon Lerner, "*Business As Usual: New Jersey Employers' Experiences with Family Leave Insurance*", finds that N.J. employers do not report experiencing the burdens or possible abuses that opponents of the legislation predicted five years ago.

The report found that none of the employers reported that the program affected productivity or turnover, and 89 percent did not report a negative impact on profitability. Despite opponents' claims that the program was would lead to abuse, no employers were aware of any. At the same time, many employers reported positive effects from the paid family leave program, including improved morale.

"Family leave insurance policies work – that's not an opinion, that's what real life experience continues to show," said Appelbaum, who has also [evaluated](#) a similar policy in California.

"As additional states consider family leave insurance programs, New Jersey's experience clearly demonstrates that it is possible to put in place a strong paid leave option that benefits families," said Phyllis Salowe-Kaye, Executive Director of NJ Citizen Action and spokesperson for the [NJ Time to Care Coalition](#).

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The [New Jersey Time to Care Coalition](#), a broad-based group of over 100 community, advocacy, union, religious, research, and academic organizations, supports initiatives that make sure working families have paid time to care.