

AARP VT
The Need For Paid Family Leave Insurance

- The issue of family caregiving is both timeless and non-partisan. Most of us are, have been, or will be, a family caregiver, or will need the help of a loved one to live independently.
- Family caregivers are the backbone of Vermont’s long term care system. They are the first line of assistance for most people, helping to make it possible for older adults and people with disabilities to remain at home, and out of costly, taxpayer-funded institutions like nursing homes.
- In many cases, these family members don’t even identify themselves formally as “caregivers”—they are sons, daughters, husbands, wives, and grandchildren. Most undertake caregiving willingly, and many find it a source of deep satisfaction. However, family caregivers face huge responsibilities, and caregiving in today’s economic climate can take a significant toll.
- Family care is extremely beneficial for the person in need, but when a family caregiver has a paid job, his or her caregiving responsibilities inevitably require short periods of time off of work. Often, employees must make work-related adjustments to accommodate the needs of the person who is ill and needs care.
- Working caregivers often must divert attention away from their jobs to tend to caregiving responsibilities. Furthermore, working caregivers have varying leave needs, with some caregivers best supported by a block of time off to care for a terminally ill family member while others may only need sporadic time off to tend to day-to-day caregiving responsibilities.
- While some legal protections—such as the national Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) —provide a useful benefit for many employees to maintain job security while experiencing a “serious medical condition” or caring for a parent, spouse or child with a serious condition—FMLA is unpaid leave and does not provide a source of income to replace lost wages. The practical reality is that many workers struggling to make ends meet from paycheck to paycheck simply cannot afford to take unpaid leave or miss a paycheck.
- AARP strongly believes that family support is a key factor in determining an older person’s ability to remain in his or her home and community, and out of institutional care settings such as nursing homes. However, the care provided by family members comes at a cost, both to the caregiver and to their families.