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Please fund the start-up costs for a universal, state-run paid family and medical leave program with \$37 million in one-time funds in the FY25 budget.

This is a critical foundational policy that will advance multiple urgent legislative goals because it addresses so many of the issues our state struggles with. Access to paid leave means better health (reducing health care costs) and increased financial security for low income workers (reducing the risk of homelessness). It helps small businesses retain workers and compete with out-of-state corporations. It keeps women in the workforce, attracts young families to our state, and ensures that our growing senior population has the resources and support they need.

It is also a proven policy. IT is not some “pie in the sky” dream that we would be piloting untested. We know it works, and we know it can be implemented successfully at the state level.

It is an investment that is needed NOW - not “down the road” or “when it’s convenient” or “after we solve other policy problems”. Those arguments have it backwards - paid leave is a key part of what WILL help solve these other big challenges facing our state. Passing paid leave now will save money in the long run, expand the work force, and provide incentives for young people and families to move to - and stay in - Vermont.

What’s more, paid leave is enormously popular among Vermont voters of all political persuasions! Nearly 80% of voters age 40+ support creating a state paid family and medical leave program here in Vermont. That includes a majority of voters in every political party, income level, and county in the state.

Please listen to the voters of Vermont and fund the start-up costs for this program in the FY25 budget.

Thank you for your consideration,

Gretchen Elias
Montpelier, VT