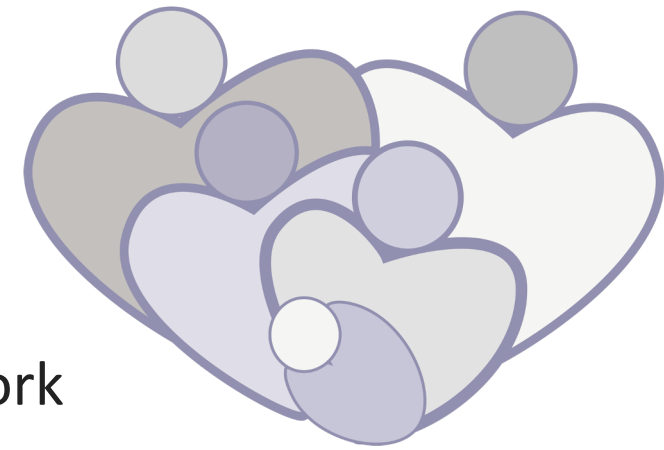


Vermonters Need a Universal Paid Family & Medical Leave Program



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The VT Paid Leave Coalition (aka FaMLI)



AARP of Vermont

Alzheimer Association-
VT Chapter

ACLU of Vermont

Good Beginnings of
Central VT

Hunger Free Vermont

Main Street Alliance

Planned Parenthood of
NNE

Rights & Democracy

VT Businesses for Social
Responsibility

VT Commission on
Women

VT Early Childhood
Advocacy Alliance

VT Foodbank

VT Interfaith Action

VT Network Against
Domestic and Sexual
Violence

VT Parent Child Center

Network

VT Public Health
Association

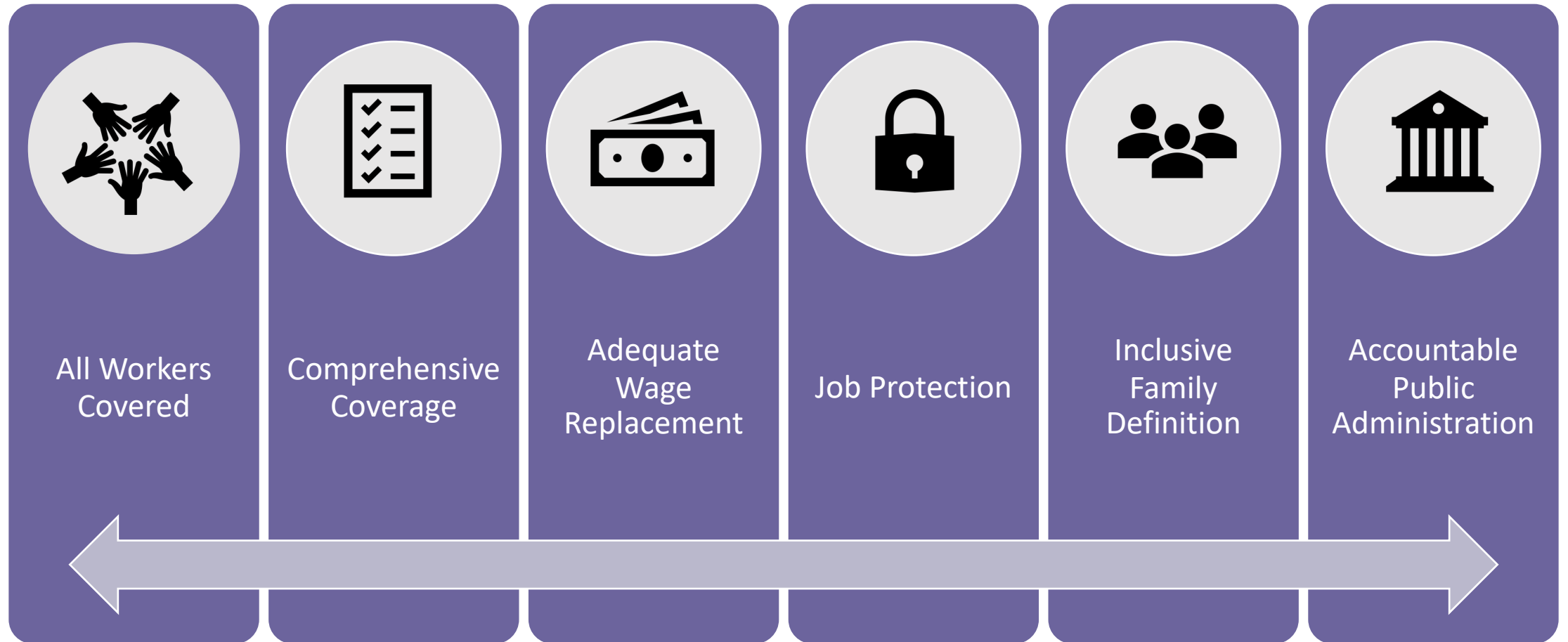
VT Works for Women

Vermont-NEA

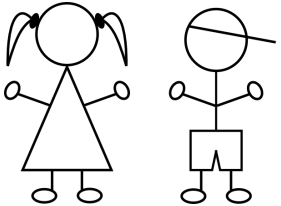
Voices for Vermont's
Children

Women Business Owners
Network

Essential Elements of a Strong Program

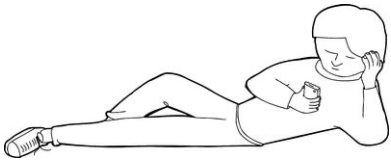


The Vermont Landscape: Working Families



76.1%

of children 0-5 have all available parents in the workforce



80.2%

of children ages 6-17 have all available parents in the workforce



**up to
46%**

Of households with children surveyed by the Census Bureau in 2022 reported “difficulty paying for usual household expenses in the past week”

Paid Leave – Health & Wellbeing Impacts



Parental Leave

- 5% fewer low birthweight babies
- 8% fewer preterm births
- 10% Fewer child deaths
- Support critically important parent-child bonding
- Improved mental health for birthing parents
- Provides additional time to find childcare, and keeps infants out of congregate settings when they are very vulnerable to illness.



Parental Leave

- Benefits are strongest when birthing parents are able to bond, heal, and establish breastfeeding for at least 12 weeks.
- Partners' early, shared involvement in the care of children is linked to reduced divorce rates as well as improved cognitive development and educational performance for their children.



Family Leave

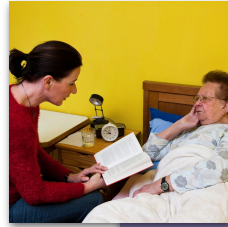
- The presence of parents shortens children's hospital stays by 31%
- Infants are more likely to be breastfed in the first year of life, more likely to have their full DPT/Polio vaccinations, and more likely to have regular checkups.

Paid Leave – Economic Stability



Medical Leave

- Lack of access to a medical leave insurance program forces parents to make impossible choices between attending to their health and forgoing a paycheck.
- Postponed treatment can lead to greater health care costs and longer work absences



Family Caregiving

- Low-income family caregivers have the highest burden of care in terms of both the number of hours they spend helping their family member and in the proportion of their income spent on care
- Pressures from balancing caregiving and work responsibilities can take a toll on caregivers, and reduced income causes them to cut back on their own health care.



Economic Security

- Mothers who have 30+ days of leave are significantly more likely to report wage increases in the year following the child's birth.
- Financial pressures lead caregivers to reduce spending on food, clothing, and children's expenses, and to increase debt.

A universal paid leave insurance program will create a rational, sustainable system rather than reacting on a case-by-case basis to life events we can predict will happen across the workforce...



...and expecting individual workers, families and businesses to absorb these costs and impacts.

Key Takeaways

- Establishing a family and medical leave insurance program has been shown to promote emotional, physical, and financial wellbeing for children and parents alike, which convey both immediate and long-term benefits.
- A PFML program will improve family economic security by supporting people in balancing their caregiving and employment roles and keeping birthing parents, in particular, in the workforce.
- 12 weeks leave is the minimum for key outcomes related to childbirth, including breastfeeding, vaccinations, and postponing exposure to infections in child care.
- The level of income replacement is key to ensuring the benefit is accessible to low-income working families.
- Everyone benefits when our working Vermonters and their families are supported, and our children get the strong, healthy beginnings they deserve.

Questions/Considerations

1. Given that JFO staff reported that 96.3% of wages would be captured by the proposed wage base in H.66 as introduced, why not simplify it by eliminating the cap altogether. I would suggest that as a social insurance program, the goal is to create a progressive structure that levels out access to paid leave, with costs allocated according to ability to pay. We don't talk about other public goods – like education or road maintenance – in terms of whether what we each individually receive back is directly proportionate to our contributions.
2. Whether there should be an opt-out for companies offering equivalent private coverage demands more attention. This [research paper](#) raises questions about potential impacts on the viability of the public program. At a minimum, we would suggest tightening up the parameters of an equivalent program so that less is left to the discretion of the Program Director.

Resources

- Meeting the Promise of Paid Leave; Best Practices in State Paid Leave Implementation (2019)

<https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-leave/meeting-the-promise-of-paid-leave.pdf>

- Kids Count Data Center – Vermont.

<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#VT/2/0/char/0>