



Vermonters Need a Universal Paid Family & Medical Leave Program

Caregiving is Essential Across the Lifespan

All Vermonters will need to take time to recover from an illness or injury, bond with a new child, or care for a loved one at some point in their lives. Ensuring we can each do so without falling behind financially is the right thing to do, and it's good public policy. When caregivers are supported and everyone's health is prioritized, we're stronger as a state.

65% of Vermonters don't have access to Paid Family and Medical Leave. This includes a disproportionate share of low-wage workers, Black and Brown workers, and parents. These workers are forced to either come to work sick or injured, delay or cancel necessary treatments, forgo critical bonding and recovery time with a new child, or take unpaid leave that jeopardizes their family's financial security. We must do better.

Vermonters know that the strength of our people, families and communities are connected. Today, we are uniquely prepared to put the lessons of the pandemic and other states' experience with paid leave to work in the service of a healthy, resilient Vermont.

We believe in

PAID
FAMILY · MEDICAL · PARENTAL
LEAVE

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Good Beginnings of Central VT
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Voices for Vermont's Children
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voicesforvorkids.org/vtpaidleave

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What is Paid Family and Medical Leave?

PFML is a social insurance program that allows people to take necessary time off work to welcome a new child to the family through birth, adoption or a foster placement; to care for a seriously injured or ill family member; and to recover from their own illness or injury – without facing financial hardship from loss of income. Inclusive programs also cover military family needs and “safe time” for people impacted by intimate partner violence.

What are the Essential Components of a Strong Program?

- **All workers covered.** Part-time, full-time, seasonal, self-employed.
- **Comprehensive Coverage.** At least 12 weeks of leave for parent, family, and serious personal medical leave covered without gender distinction.
- **Adequate wage replacement:** High enough to ensure all workers can afford to take the leave they need, including low-income workers who need as much of their income as possible to pay their bills. This is generally accomplished through progressive wage replacement, with up to 100% replacement for lower-wage workers, capped around median income.
- **Efficient Public Administration.** Privatization of public goods and services has been shown to worsen inequities. A strong paid leave program will be administered by the state so it is accountable to Vermonters.
- **Inclusive family definition** to meet the needs of today’s workforce.
- **Job Protection.** A strong paid family and medical leave law would ensure all workers have the right to return to work following leave and will not be punished or fired for taking leave.

What's at Stake?

As a state, we’ve committed to grounding our public policy in racial and social equity. Unmet need for leave is substantially higher for those with children, people of color and people with low incomes. Paid leave insurance programs that fail to address the barriers facing people subject to economic exploitation will maintain or even worsen disparities, as we’ve seen in early adopter states who started with low wage replacement rates, weak or unclear job protections, and complicated eligibility requirements.