

Chelsea Myers
11 Tabor Hill Rd. Fairfax VT 05454
802-598-1104
Chellabelle89@gmail.com

A perfect storm of health emergencies have damaged my family emotionally and financially. It would have been much easier to weather if we had access to paid family and medical leave.

Following the birth of my second child in 2022, I suffered from a postpartum hemorrhage and then endured severe postpartum mental health issues. I was hospitalized multiple times for suicidal ideation, and when I was home, I wasn't well enough to care for myself or my kids.

It was a painful experience, for myself and my family. I missed the first six months of my daughter's life.

My partner had to take unpaid time away from his work to care for our children while I was in the hospital. Today, I'm still recovering, and he's working full-time, plus any overtime he can get, to try to make ends meet.

We both have student loans, and the financial shock of unpaid time off pushed us into serious financial insecurity. We do not qualify for government assistance because my partner "earns too much," yet we cannot afford basic living expenses.

My husband and I have been together for 16 years, but we've never experienced anything like this. After nearly 2 years, we're struggling to pay our bills and buy food and clothing for our children. I didn't have any control over this, but I feel ashamed that my family is experiencing such hardship.

The extreme stress I've felt has made my recovery even more challenging. My husband feels guilty that he doesn't see his kids enough and doesn't have the energy to be the father he wants to be.

We're running on empty.

While a robust family leave program wouldn't have completely resolved all our family's issues, it would have provided the crucial support we were desperately seeking. It would have given us time to approach things with a clearer head, less stress, and more security. It would have made my recovery - and my children's early years - smoother.

It would have been something my husband and I could have counted on during the worst moments of our lives.

The Vermont House advanced a strong paid family and medical leave program, H.66, to the Senate. H.66 would provide workers with up to 12 weeks of paid leave to welcome a new child,

recover from a serious health condition, or care for a loved one. If passed, it would be a critical life raft for Vermonters in tough times.

At some point in their lives, everyone will need to take time away from work to care for themselves or their loved ones. Nearly 80% of voters aged 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. Every day, Vermonters are forced to choose between their paycheck and caring for their loved ones or themselves. We hear their stories all the time. These are desperate situations - and they are preventable. I hope lawmakers will think about families like mine and make sure there is paid leave for Vermonters when they need it.