MARCH FOR MOMS

Advocacy at Work: An Advocacy Toolkit for Working Caregivers



The March for Moms Advocacy Guide was developed in partnership with the Stuart Weitzman Bold Movers Grant from the Tapestry Foundation to support this initiative aimed at advancing inclusive workplace policies for working mothers and caregivers.

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Introduction

Navigating healthcare legislation can often feel overwhelming, especially when it directly impacts the well-being of families. Recently, both state and federal governments have taken steps toward improving parental and employee leave policies, which aim to enhance maternal and family care across the United States. However, the U.S. continues to face a maternal health crisis, and the current system falls short of supporting childbearing families with the care they deserve. At the

March for Moms 2024

same time, working caregivers are grappling with limited access to paid leave, time off, and necessary workplace accommodations. These legislative efforts, while critical, can be complex to understand and advocate for.

That's why March for Moms created this guide—to empower individuals and families with the knowledge they need to advocate for themselves and others. By shedding light on the state of maternity care and outlining the key legislative initiatives at both state and federal levels, we aim to make it easier for concerned citizens to raise their voices and drive meaningful change. Our goal is to help ensure that every family in the U.S. can grow and thrive with dignity.

Supporting Your Leadership

At March for Moms, we understand that stepping into the world of advocacy can feel daunting, but by picking up this guide, you've already taken the first brave step. You may not see yourself as a leader yet, but the truth is, you already are. By choosing to engage and take action, you've become a change-maker within your community. Your voice—and the voices of families across the country—are vital in driving the systemic changes we need. We're here to support you every step of the way, because your leadership is key to creating a better future for all families.

Intended Audience

Anyone who has witnessed the woefully inadequate support structure for parents in the United States and desires to further their understanding of the issues surrounding maternal care and family-friendly policies to impact change at the state or federal level.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to equip you with key information and statistics on the issues that everyday families face in their caretaking and parenting journeys - issues like paid family leave, paid time off, and accommodations for pregnant

workers. Whether you're advocating for yourself, your family, or your community, this guide provides practical tools to help you make an impact. Our "How To" section offers step-by-step instructions on reaching out to legislators, crafting clear and compelling messages, and using social media to amplify your advocacy.

While organizations like ours have long focused on improving maternal health and combating the U.S.'s rising maternal mortality rates, it's equally important to recognize the daily challenges families face. From managing illnesses and caregiving for children and aging parents to taking time off to welcome a new baby, these are universal experiences that deserve attention and support. Now is the time to expand the conversation beyond healthcare to include the broader realities of family life. By advocating for changes that address these pressing needs, you can help shape a future that supports all families—yours included.

Policy Background

Current State:

The U.S. is facing a critical gap in paid family leave and pregnancy protections compared to other industrialized nations. Here are the key facts:

- The United States is the only industrialized nation without a comprehensive national paid family leave policy.¹
- Only 25% of the workforce has access to paid family leave through their employers.²
- Just 41% of workers have personal medical leave, typically through employer-provided short-term disability programs.³
- The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for personal medical reasons or to care for a family member. However, it leaves many workers without financial support during leave. ²
- Until the recent passage of the *Pregnant Workers Fairness Act*, protections and accommodations for pregnant workers were extremely limited.⁴

• Childbearing individuals make up around 50% of the labor force, playing a crucial role in both the workforce and as caretakers for aging family members.⁵ However, this group often lacks essential social support and protections.

While a national policy has yet to be instituted, many states are taking action. Some have passed their own paid family leave laws to address these gaps. For an overview of where each state stands, refer to the *Bipartisan Policy Center's Paid Family Leave Law Map* here.

Future State:

Looking forward, there are four key pieces of legislation that aim to address the urgent need for paid family leave and pregnancy protections. These laws are either newly passed or in need of further support and advocacy:

- 1. **Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act**: Proposes paid family and medical leave for all workers.
- 2. **Pregnant Workers Fairness Act**: Ensures reasonable accommodations for pregnant workers; this bill was recently passed but still requires monitoring and support for proper implementation.
- 3. **Healthy Families Act**: Would guarantee paid sick days for employees, ensuring time off for illness and caregiving.
- 4. **Protected Time Off (PTO) Act**: Aims to expand access to paid time off for all workers, including caregiving and personal medical needs.

In this guide, March for Moms will provide you with:

- Background information on each piece of legislation.
- Resources from partner organizations focused on each act.
- Tools and strategies to help you advocate for these important policies in your community.

Together, we can drive the changes needed to support families and caregivers across the U.S.

1. The Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act

The Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act would create a comprehensive national program that helps meet the needs of new parents and people with serious personal or family health issues through a shared fund that makes paid leave affordable for employers of all sizes and for workers and their families.

March for Moms believes every family should have access to paid family leave. The U.S. is the only industrialized nation without paid family leave. Families and birthing people deserve support during a challenging time which often includes medical recovery and need for mental health support. March for Moms has supported state level paid family leave initiatives. Today, eleven states have passed paid family leave acts including California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington, and Washington, D.C.⁶ New Hampshire and Vermont provide a *voluntary* opportunity to purchase insurance coverage, though they do not legally guarantee workers the right to paid leave.^{7,8}

As legislation is introduced, it moves through committees, where it is closely examined by legislators. At this time, the FAMILY Act has been referred to the Senate Committee on Finance and the House Committee on Ways and Means.

It is most productive to contact the members of the committees and show your support for the bill. The members are listed below.

Senate Committee on Finance⁹

Majority Members (14)

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House Committee on Ways and Means9

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You can learn more about this act from our partners at the National Partnership for Women and Families by visiting their FAQ page here:

https://nationalpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/family-act-f act-sheet.pdf?wpId=64863

2. The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA) is a federal law that requires covered employers to provide "reasonable accommodations" to a qualified worker's known limitations related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions.

The law protects pregnant workers when they need accommodations.¹⁰

WHAT ARE SOME POSSIBLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PREGNANT WORKERS?

- Schedule changes or time off to go to health care appointments
- Extra bathroom breaks
- A chair or stool to sit on while working
- The ability to telework full or part-time
- A private place to pump breast milk
- Leave to recover from childbirth
- Breaks to eat and drink
- Light duty

d drink

This law was passed! March for Moms worked closely with our partner organizations to help this bill become law. After laws are passed, they still need to be upheld and/or funded. In this case, expressing your appreciation and asking your legislator to continue support of pregnant workers is key. Recently, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act has come under <u>legal scrutiny in the state of Texas</u>¹¹, and a federal court in Texas blocked the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the federal government agency that enforces the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, from accepting PWFA complaints filed by people who work for Texas's state government.. This ruling has limited access to accommodations previously awarded to pregnant people in Texas, and could serve as a precedent to remove protections from other workers across the country in the future.

It is important you contact your <u>federal</u> and <u>state</u> legislators to show continued support. *If you are in the state of Texas, this is especially important.*

Learn more about this act by reading material compiled by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission:

https://www.eeoc.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/PWFA%20%28Healthcare%20Post

er%29-11.pdf-13_508FINAL.pdf (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission)

Know Your Rights: Pregnant Workers Fairness Act

https://nwlc.org/resource/know-your-rights-pregnant-workers-fairness-act/

3. The Healthy Families Act

The Healthy Families Act would set a national paid sick days standard – a critical step toward meeting the health and financial needs of working families.

The Healthy Families Act would:¹²

- Allow workers in businesses with 15 or more employees to earn up to seven job protected paid sick days each year to be used to recover from their own illnesses, access preventive care, provide care to a sick family member, or attend school meetings related to a child's health condition or disability. Workers in businesses with fewer than 15 employees would earn up to seven job-protected unpaid sick days each year to be used for the same reasons, unless their employers choose to offer paid sick days.
- Allow workers who are survivors of domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault to use their paid sick days to recover or seek assistance related to an incident. Workers would earn a minimum of one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked, up to 56 hours (seven days) per year.
- Allow employers to require certification if an employee uses more than three paid sick days in a row.
- Allow employers to use their existing policies, as long as they meet the minimums set forth in the Healthy Families Act for time, types of use and method of use, and give employers flexibility as to how they define a "year" for the purposes of sick time accrual.

March for Moms endorses this legislation as part of comprehensive support families need to ensure time off, decreased stress, and ample time navigating unforeseen circumstances.

The legislation was introduced by Sen.Sanders [I-VT] in June, 2023 and can

benefit from bipartisan support with Republican <u>co-sponsors</u>. Co-sponsors of bills show explicit support, and the more bipartisan support the bill has, the more likely it is to advance and pass. Please consider contacting your legislator, especially if they are a registered Republican, to invite them to co-sponsor.

You can learn more about this act from our partners at the National Partnership for Women and Families by visiting their FAQ page here:

https://nationalpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ the-healthy-families-act-fact-sheet.pdf

(National Partnership for Women and Families)

4. The Protected Time Off Act

The Protected Time Off Act would provide guaranteed paid protected time off. The legislation would enforce providing at least 10 paid days off per year to all full time employees.

Similarly to the lack of paid family leave for childbirth, the United States is the only developed nation that does not have federally mandated paid time off for full time employees. Currently, about ½ of all private sector workers or over 27 million people lack the ability to take paid time off. Lack of access to paid time off can be extremely detrimental to the worker and the business. It has been shown that if the worker has access to regular time off, they can improve performance and their mental health, which increases productivity and happiness in the workplace.

The Protected Time Off or PTO Act was introduced by Seth Magaziner [D-RI] in March, 2024. The bill has over 50 co-sponsors in the House and is introduced in parallel to Guaranteed Paid Vacation Act also in the House of Representatives.

All employers who have at least one full time employee will need to abide by this law after 60 days of employment. The time would accrue at 1 hour of PTO for every 25 hours worked and the time can be used for any purpose provided the employee gives a two week notice before taking time off.

March for Moms endorses this legislation as part of comprehensive support families need for guaranteed time off. The bill was referred to the House Education and Workforce Committee and the House Judiciary. If your legislator is on any of these committees, ask them to co-sponsor and voice their support of the legislation in committee hearings.

House Education and Workforce Committee

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Learn more about this legislation here:

https://magaziner.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/magaziner.house.gov/files/evo-medi a-document/PTO%20Act%20bill%20Text%20FINAL.pdf

How-To Guides

Now that you have an understanding of the statistics and information it is time to put what you know to use. The two best ways to advocate are to:

- 1. meet with your elected officials to advocate
- 2. raise awareness via social media

Below you will find two How-To Guides on advocacy and social media.

How To: Advocacy

Learn how to prepare for a meeting with a legislator, what to cover during the meeting, and how to follow up.

How To: Social Media

Learn strategies for advocating to legislators or to your personal networks via social media to raise awareness of the issues at stake and provide a call-to-action for others.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Congratulations on beginning your advocacy journey with our guide!

Policy changes occur when individuals voice their concerns and demand improvements. You, as part of the March for Moms team, are the reason such changes will occur!

Questions?

Please email any feedback, questions or concerns to March for Moms at info@marchformoms.org

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