



PRESS RELEASE

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Paid Family Leave to Become Significantly More Accessible to Low-Income Californians Under Newly Proposed Legislation

Advocates of family friendly workplace policies applaud efforts by Governor Newsom and Senator Jackson to expand job protection and income replacement

SAN FRANCISCO (January 17, 2019) —**Legal Aid at Work**, the **California Work & Family Coalition**, and the **California Employment Lawyers Association (CELA)** are in staunch support of new legislative efforts to ensure all California workers, particularly low wage workers, can take paid family leave without risking their jobs or financial stability.

California once led the Nation in providing paid family leave to workers, but it has not kept pace with the evolving needs of working families. While California now allows workers to receive six weeks of partial pay to care for a family member or bond with a new child, the program does not give workers the right to take the time off. This means that workers can be fired for accessing



these benefits—which they already pay for out of their own paychecks—unless they qualify for job-protected leave under an incomplete patchwork of other laws.

The gap between the State’s paid family leave program and job-protection laws disproportionately affects low-wage workers, who are at the highest risk for losing their job when needing to access paid family leave.

“Many people don’t realize how precarious the situation is for low-wage workers,” said Legal Aid at Work attorney Julia Parish. “Even though they can receive pay if they take leave to care for their loved ones—because they have already paid into the system—they can nevertheless be fired when they do so. We need to be sure that employees don’t have to choose between the health of their families and their jobs.”

“Partial wage replacement is also insufficient for low-income California workers—many parents and caregivers already work two or more jobs just to keep a roof over their heads and support their families,” said Jenya Cassidy, Director of the California Work & Family Coalition. “Many families can’t get by on 60% of their wages. We need full wage replacement, and we need it for longer than six weeks.”


Governor Gavin Newsom has recently announced his intent to make paid family leave a reality for all Californians, most recently saying on Twitter that “Paid family leave isn’t a nice-to-have — it’s a must-have. And we’re going to make it happen.” Taking the Governor up on his call for action, **Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson** (D-Santa Barbara), who has been a longstanding champion for family-friendly workplace policies, has introduced SB 135 to make this promise a reality.

[Senate Bill 135](#) sets out a number of priorities for the Legislature on family leave:

- Ensuring that workers can’t be fired when they take paid family leave;
- Extending the time period workers can take to bond with their child for the first six months of a newborn’s life or to care for a seriously ill family member;
- Expanding the definition of family member in our family leave laws to reflect the realities of today’s working families; and
- Increasing the wage replacement amount in the paid family leave Program to ensure families can afford to take leave to care for children and family members.

“We applaud Senator Jackson and her continued efforts to strengthen our family leave laws to adequately reflect the realities of today’s working families. All Californians should be able to care for a seriously ill family member or bond with a new child without having to risk their job or suffer financial hardship.” said Mariko Yoshihara, Legislative Counsel & Policy Director for the California Employment Lawyers Association.

Study after study has demonstrated the benefits of paid family leave. For example, increases in the pay-rate of paid family Leave has been linked to more fathers taking leave; fathers who take paternity leave are also more likely to be actively engaged in their child’s care nine months after birth, more likely to read to their children at age 3, and a father’s engagement in their children’s



care has shown to have lasting effects on the development of children, including greater achievement on assessments for language skills, cognition, and social development. Paid parental leave is also associated with an increased rate and duration of breastfeeding, decreased maternal depression, and increased use of life-saving preventative care, such as vaccinations.

Further, paid family leave is good for businesses as well. Employees who are able to take protected leave to bond with a newborn are less likely to leave their jobs, which reduces the high costs of employee turnover for employers. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, small businesses have reported that paid family leave has had either a “positive effect” or “no noticeable effect” on productivity (89%), profitability/performance (91%), turnover (92%), and morale (99%).

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About Legal Aid at Work:

Legal Aid at Work advances justice and economic opportunity for low-income people and their families at work, in school, and in the community. Overall, our clients are among the nearly eight million California residents who cannot adequately support themselves and their families, despite the fact that 79.5% of Californian families living in poverty have at least one adult working. We believe that all persons deserve dignity and fair treatment in the workplace and economic stability for themselves and their families. www.legalaidatwork.org

About the California Work & Family Coalition

The California Work & Family Coalition is a groundbreaking alliance of community organizations, unions, and non-profits working together to pass new laws and promote work-family policies that help parents, caregivers, children and families thrive. We envision a world where all people have the time, resources, and support systems to care for themselves and their families and to lead meaningful, healthy, and happy lives. Our Mission is to organize communities to realize equitable, family-friendly workplaces and to expand the social safety net in California through policy, advocacy, and education. <http://workfamilyca.org>.

About the California Employment Lawyers Association (CELA):

CELA exists to protect and expand the legal rights and opportunities of all California workers and to strengthen the community of lawyers who represent them. www.cela.org