

Strengthen Families: Enact Paid Family Leave Insurance

Workplace laws and policies in New York have failed to keep up with the demographics of working families. Although the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 permits employees of large companies to take up to 12 weeks of **unpaid** leave, many employees are not covered or cannot afford to lose their pay.¹ Many working New Yorkers are unable to take time off from work for when a family member has a medical emergency or when a child is born or adopted.

Why is Paid Family Leave Important?

Most employers do not offer paid family leave, forcing workers to choose between their jobs and caring for a member. Higher wage earners are more likely to have paid family leave than low-wage earners, which means that those least able to afford to miss a pay check are being put in untenable positions.

How Does It Work?

AB 3870/SB 3004 would enact Paid Family Leave Insurance (PFLI), ensuring that employees receive two-thirds of their average weekly wage when they need to take paid family leave, up to a maximum benefit level.² This maximum benefit level would be raised in steps over four years until it equals 50% of the statewide average weekly wage.³

During leave, employees will have job protection while utilizing their PFLI benefits without discrimination or job loss.

Paid family leave is good for businesses:⁴

- PFLI will become a part of New York's Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) program.
- The weekly PFLI benefit will be financed solely through employee payroll deductions of up to 45 cents a week in the first year.
- PFLI is expected to benefit employers by lowering turnover, boosting productivity, and enhancing employee morale.

Three states: California (2002), New Jersey (2008), and Rhode Island (2013) have successfully incorporated paid family leave laws into their TDI programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2015-2016

New York should enact AB 3870 / SB 3004 to make Paid Family Leave Insurance available so that working families do not have to choose between caring for a child or other family members and keeping their income.

Paid Family Leave should cover up to up to 12 weeks of paid family leave to bond with a new child; care for a seriously ill family member; or address needs related to a family member's military service or deployment.

¹ A Better Balance, "New York Needs: Paid Family Leave Insurance Act," April 2014

<http://www.abetterbalance.org/web/images/stories/Documents/familyleave/FLI4Pager.pdf>

² A Better Balance, "At a Glance: The New York State Paid Family Leave Insurance Act," April 2014

³ *Ibid*

⁴ *Ibid*