

Democrats Unveil Paid Family Medical Leave For All

Written by Francesca Yunjung Hong Press

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New policy would apply to all employers, not just those with 50 or more employees.

MADISON - Wednesday, Representatives Francesca Hong, Kalan Haywood, Alex Joers and Senators LaTonya Johnson and Kelda Roys, as well as stakeholders, held a press conference introducing legislation that would create a paid family and medical leave policy in Wisconsin.

The bill would establish a family and medical leave insurance program and make key improvements to Wisconsin's unpaid leave law, the Family and Medical Leave Law, by:

- amending the law to eliminate the carve out for employers with under 50 employees, thus ensuring that all workers in Wisconsin are covered,
- expanding the law to give workers access to take leave to care for all of their closest loved ones, regardless of their legal or biological relationship,
- amending the covered purposes to cover leave for certain needs arising from domestic abuse, stalking, or sexual abuse when the worker or the worker's family member is a survivor, as well as for certain military family needs,
- and increasing the amount of leave available under the law to 14 weeks in the aggregate.

Rep. Francesca Hong (D-76) released the following statement about the bill:

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“Wisconsin’s working families deserve support. Seismic social and economic shifts have made it increasingly difficult to juggle the demands of work and life. Currently, about 76% of Wisconsin workers do not have access to paid leave through their employer. This means when a critical life event occurs, many are left to choose between a paycheck and caring for themselves and their loved ones. With the introduction of paid family and medical leave, we can build care infrastructure that looks out for everyone while supporting and strengthening our economy.”

Rep. Kalan Haywood (D-16) added:

“As our national demographics evolve, we must change Wisconsin into an environment where families of color can thrive, not just survive. It is incumbent upon us to raise the standard of living in Wisconsin to attract the best and brightest to show that Wisconsin is an innovative and compassionate place to work and live.”

Sen. LaTonya Johnson (D-6) added:

“Wisconsin faces a workforce shortage and has seen young people leave our state at an alarming rate. It is past time for us to implement policies that are pro-family and pro-economic growth. We can start by ensuring Wisconsinites have access to a paid family leave program.”

Sen. Kelda Roys (D-26) added:

“As a small business owner, paid family leave will level the playing field for workers and small businesses throughout the state. Passing paid family leave is one thing we can do to make Wisconsin’s economy stronger and help make it a place where people want to build their careers and their families.”

Rep. Alex Joers (D-79) concluded:

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“Establishing paid family and medical leave is imperative to the wellbeing of families across Wisconsin. There are few initiatives more important than the ability of Wisconsinites to take care of their loved ones. Investing in families is the right thing to do and is a necessary, past-due commitment to the future of our state.”