

May 15, 2022

The Honorable Senator Eric Pratt
Chair, Jobs and Economic Growth Finance and Policy
Minnesota Senate

The Honorable Mohamud Noor
Chair, Workforce and Business Development Finance and Policy
Minnesota House of Representatives

Dear Chairs Pratt and Noor,

The Women's Foundation of Minnesota urges the conference committee to include Paid Family and Medical Leave in its final bill to advance the health and economic security of families across the State of Minnesota. As a statewide community foundation since 1983, the Women's Foundation is more than just a funder. We work with and for communities to address the greatest challenges facing women and girls in our state through grantmaking, research, and public policy. Like you, we want Minnesota to be a state of which we can all be proud.

To retain the workforce we need, paid family and medical leave should be a basic right and not a privilege. While you or I may have the luxury of taking this policy for granted, that right is not available to too many in our state. We know from the *Status of Women & Girls in Minnesota* research we share every two years, and from the women and communities we listen to around our state, family and medical leave is key to the long-term success of women, families, and all human beings, and should not be optional.

As we enter the third year of the pandemic, this committee understands we need to help return to the workforce the historic numbers of women who have been pushed out if we are to meet the ongoing challenges to our workforce and our businesses. We can see how far we have to go to value the work of women – particularly those pushed to the margins – with an infrastructure that values their work and caregiving, and does not leave their talent on the sidelines.

The data shows: Women are concentrated in low-wage occupations, like service industries, where benefits are scarce and pay is low, and women of color dominate these fields. And yet, a significant portion of Minnesota's mothers are the primary breadwinner in the family: 58% of Black mothers, and 46% of Native American mothers are the heads of their households, and yet their work is not only poorly compensated – it lacks basic benefits.

Whole families stand to lose in the system as it currently stands, not just women. To achieve economic security and a fair economic playing field, we must value the work and the roles that women provide by compensating – at minimum – her right to take a leave and return to the . The essential building blocks of economic security and wealth workforce. The essential building blocks of economic security and wealth-building consistently shortchange our Black, Indigenous, Latina, immigrant women and other women of color, and we cannot stand by and pretend we can't do anything about it.

Investing in women benefits children, families, and communities. To do something about the barriers that keep working women from the dignity we all deserve, we must intervene and ensure paid family and medical leave is a basic right for all people by passing Paid Family and Medical Leave this session.

Thank you,



Gloria Perez

CEO/President

President & CEO

Women's Foundation of Minnesota