



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,

As members of the Executive Council for the Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota, we write to urge support for the creation of a statewide paid family and medical leave program for all workers in Minnesota. The opportunity to care for our families and ourselves without risking our family's economic security should be available to all Minnesotans.

The Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota (YWI MN) is a multi-year, multi-faceted effort to center and engage those most impacted by barriers to create long-term solutions. The Executive Council for the Initiative is made up of cross-sector leaders committed to creating inclusive, equitable workplace policies and culture to build a stronger state for all young women, their families, and their communities. We believe that our state's future prosperity is interwoven, and Minnesota will benefit when young women pushed to the margins get exactly what they need to thrive. Many of us have our own experiences with needing to take leave to care for our families and we believe everyone in Minnesota should have that opportunity with paid leave.

Paid family and medical leave for all Minnesotans will build economic justice for Minnesotans because when we listen to women around our state, family and medical leave is key to the long-term success of women, parents, and all human beings, and should not be optional. 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.



Data shows that 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. While one in five of Minnesota's white women work in service jobs, more than one in three Latina, African American, and Native American women work in service fields where benefits are scarce. In contrast, 12% of men work in these occupations. These workers have to make heartbreaking and health-risking choices to care for themselves or loved ones or lose a paycheck or, worse, their jobs.

Paid family and medical leave means workers do not have to choose between caregiving and working. And, paid leave is good for employers in this tight job market. Women with access to paid leave are significantly more likely to return to their previous jobs and build more experience in their jobs. For employers, this means retaining valued workers and for women, this means increased earnings and closing the pay gap.

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. We urge you to act this session to build economic security for women, girls, and their families with a statewide paid family and medical leave program for all workers in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

The Executive Council for the Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota

Gloria Perez, Co-Chair
President & CEO, Women's Foundation of Minnesota

Dr. Verna Price, Co-Chair
CEO, The Power of People Consulting Group

Emily Larson
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