

Dear Early Childhood Committee,

I am writing in support of Paid Family Medical Leave. As a new mother this is an essential support for new families. We need 12 weeks to give our newest citizens the best developmental start they can get, no matter if we are black, brown, or white. Breastfeeding worked for me and my son, however pumping didn't. When I returned to work after 12 weeks (6 weeks unpaid) I couldn't breastfeed him anymore. I am grateful I was at least able to give him some breastmilk.

An equal opportunity to bond and caretake between both parents is very important to me. Thankfully my spouse and I had this opportunity, however I know that we are privileged (I took 12 weeks then he took 4 weeks). This has continued to help us be more equal in our household and responsibilities with our child. Passing paid family leave will help equalize the sexes in our great state. I want all new parents to have the same great start that our new family had.

Kindly,
Ellory Roske

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Dear Early Childhood Committee:

I am writing in support of Paid Family Medical Leave. It is imperative that we support all parents — particularly working mothers — by passing key legislation like this bill. I want future families to have the paid support that was not available to me when I became a first-time mother and especially when I faced a devastating journey as a NICU parent with my second-born.

Having my child endure a NICU stay was one of the most challenging and painful chapters of my life. But what made it even worse was the lack of support I received from my employer, so much so that **I considered leaving the workforce.** My family would have survived because my husband had a well-paying job and an extremely supportive employer that was willing to work with us rather than make us choose work over family. **It is a privilege that we recognize is not available to everyone as a last-resort option.**

Too many women and their families are forced to return to work too soon in order to provide for their families, and that is wrong. **Parents should not have to worry about income and supporting their families during this beautiful moment in their lives.**

As a first-world country, it is unbelievable to me why our government chooses to turn its head on working families and especially on women. It is a blatant disregard for equality in the workforce, and the lack of action speaks volumes. It sends a clear message that we're not valued — we're faceless, replaceable, and matter only when it comes to the company's bottom line.

I implore you to make a difference and show your support for working families, but especially working women, and vote in favor of Paid Family Medical Leave.

Sincerely,
Erica Winegar

Dear Early Childhood Committee Members-

I am writing in support of paid family leave. A policy like this could have changed my family's life and would take away some of the stigma and financial difficulties of working parents, particularly mothers who we know face greater stigma and barriers once they have children.

I had an unplanned pregnancy at 24. I was married and working full time in addition to going to school full time. I had started to intern in addition to my full time job and my internship supervisor consistently told me she wouldn't have hired me if she knew I was pregnant and tried to stop me from meeting my hours needed to graduate. Because of this I was only able to take 5 days off that internship when my son was born. My partner got the day he was born off and 3 additional days. We did not have extended family support or any choices so I found someone on craigslist to take my newborn, too young for daycare, so that we could do what we needed to do. No one should have to make this choice. I work in mental health and I know how detrimental this period was for my son (and for me). Children need to be with their parents in the beginning to develop a secure and attuned attachment- this is well researched and has a ton of effects later in life.

Paid family leave would have allowed my partner to stay home with our son until he was old enough for daycare instead of leaving him with a stranger (would not have affected my internship situation directly because it was unpaid). It would perhaps shift some of the stigma around having children. It would make sure no one is left totally unsupported.

Thank you for your time.

Kendall Leona

Dear Early Childhood Committee,

All Minnesota parents and their newborn or newly adopted children need and deserve 12 weeks of PFML to bond with each other. This time together helps parents become competent and

confident with resilient, thriving children.

Access to PFML is an important first step in closing the achievement gap in Minnesota's schools.

Kathy Robey , a mother, grandmother, and a leader with ISAIAH

I believe it is essential that the Paid Medical and Family Bill be passed to bring about healthier Minnesotan families. Minnesotans should not have to fear losing their jobs due to illness or caring for a loved one. Minnesota should be a state that supports all residents who are working and caring for each other to make a better life.

Barbara Salava

To: Early Childhood Committee

Every child white, black, or brown needs a parent and never more than when sick. But a parent leaving work hurts both the employer and the family's income. To make this unnecessary we must give both workers and employers Paid Family and Medical Leave.

Richard Podvin

Dear Early Childhood Committee,

I am writing in support of Paid Family Medical Leave.

As a society, we like to say that our children are our future. And this is true. Within each child resides potential, potential that we as parents, as a society, have the great responsibility and the great honor to help develop. But we must not forget that our children are also our present. And to invest in our future, we must also make changes now.

When we brought our daughter Eliana into this world, our connection was instant. But the deep bond and trusting relationship we enjoy now as she approaches eight months of life was not formed overnight. It was formed over *many* nights with little sleep and hazy days of trial, error and triumph with everything from feeding to bathing and beyond.

It took *time*.

Time we needed to rest, recover, set routine and most importantly build relationship.
Time we needed to restore to our full selves and return to work ready to contribute to society at large.

Time that we were privileged enough to take.

Piecing together short-term disability, saved up PTO, unpaid time and the CARES act, we found time to care for Eliana and for ourselves. I was able to take 10 weeks; my husband Michael took 12. We were fortunate to have that time — and to have jobs waiting for us on the other side. To not have to choose between some of the most sacred moments of one's life and one's very livelihood — **this is a privilege that should be policy for all.**

Enacting Paid Family Medical Leave is a legislative decision that impacts everyone.

Eliana's birth transformed Michael and me as individuals and as a family — and even in a pandemic, no family operates in true isolation. The family system is inextricably linked to larger systems at work in our society. As such, Minnesota would do well to take care of it. We believe Paid Family Medical Leave is one important way to support families and, in effect, our broader community. We must tend to our children's potential, even while we realize — and take responsibility for — our own.

Thank you for your efforts to pass this bill, for endeavoring to dedicate resources to our greatest nonrenewable resource, time, and to our greatest hope for our future and joy of our present: our children.

Best,
Sarah Gavigan and Michael Gavigan

Early Childhood Committee,

I am writing in support of HF1200 for Paid Family Leave. I have seen multiple friends unable to spend the time needed for healthy development with their newborns. I've also seen more affluent friends have this opportunity and is something they immensely valued. It is crucial that we support families and help babies get a healthy and happy grounding as newborns. This sets them up for successful child development as they continue to grow.

The opportunity for parents to have this vital time with newborns shouldn't be limited to those with certain economic status. We know that our families of color are less likely to have access to PFML, so if we are truly using an equity lens in our policy making, we know that PFML for all (no exceptions) is necessary.

Thank you for your time,

Shannon Conk

Early Childhood Committee,

I am writing in support of HF1200 for Paid Family Leave.

As an expecting mother, this is of particular interest to me. And as a self-employed person in a dual-income household, I plan to take 8 weeks off to simply be with my baby.

I'm considered "lucky," but I'll be giving up months of income in a time when money will be tighter than ever, and my husband, considered to have "excellent benefits" will get a mere two weeks of paid parental leave.

The opportunity for parents to have this vital time with their newborns shouldn't be limited to those who can afford it. We need paid family leave for Minnesotans -- across the board and without exception -- so that families of color can have the same opportunities to bond with their babies in those crucial early days.

Taking time off to be with your newborn is considered a luxury; I believe it should be considered the norm. Minnesota can afford to provide this support. It is an investment in our collective future that will pay off.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Kate Westlund Tovsen