

FACT SHEET

What is the FAMILY Act?

- **The FAMILY Act Defined:** The Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act (“FAMILY Act”) is a federal bill that would provide up to 12 weeks of paid leave for workers to take time away from their jobs to care for their own health or that of their parent, spouse, domestic partner, or child. This includes time needed to care for a new child and for particular military caregiving and leave purposes.
- **Who is Covered:** Workers employed by any company, regardless of the company’s size or the employee’s length of time on the job, would be eligible for paid family and medical leave. In addition, self-employed, low-wage, contingent, and part-time workers would also be covered, unlike other federal leave programs.
- **Funding:** Employee pay during leave is self-funded through employer and employee payroll contributions of 0.2% of a given paycheck, which amounts to less than \$2.00 per week for the typical worker.

Why is the FAMILY Act necessary?

- **Lack of Paid Leave:** Only 13% of the private sector workforce has paid family leave through their employers, and less than 40% has personal medical leave through an employer-provided temporary disability program. Americans without access to paid leave struggle with forfeited wages and the possibility of losing their jobs if taking leave to care for loved one in need.
- **An Insufficient Federal Solution:** The Family and Medical Leave Act (“FMLA”) currently guarantees time off for workers, but the time it guarantees is unpaid and only available to workers of employers meeting certain size requirements. For this reason, many workers cannot afford to take FMLA, or are ineligible for the benefit.
- **An At-Risk LGBTQ Population:** The U.S. workforce contains approximately 5.4 million lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) workers. Nearly half (48%) of LGBTQ women under 50 living alone or with a spouse or partner are raising a child under age 18, along with one-fifth of LGBTQ men (20%). LGBTQ people currently face high risks of job discrimination with no adequate remedy under federal law. The vast majority of states have no laws prohibiting workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and children with LGBTQ parents live in poverty at twice the national rate, putting their families at greater risk when forfeiting pay or risking their job to take unpaid leave to care for themselves, a child, or a dependent partner or spouse. A national paid medical and family leave program would provide baseline protections for the many LGBTQ-headed families living throughout the country, and would ensure no parent has to choose between their job and their family.

Who would benefit from the FAMILY Act?

- **Businesses:** A majority of small businesses and employers throughout the country support paid family and medical leave, because the programs provide financial security to employees, increasing employee loyalty and reducing expensive turnover. In states where paid leave programs have existed for years, employers have found that employees utilizing paid leave return to work after their leave is finished, their absence ultimately costing their employer less than if they had left permanently. In turn, when employees’ economic security is protected, these workers and families are less likely to rely on social supports and better able to pay for things like rent, groceries, and luxuries, strengthening the economy.
- **Parents and Children:** 3 million LGBTQ Americans have had a child and as many as 6 million American children and adults have an LGBTQ parent. As stated above, LGBTQ-headed families experience poverty at a higher rate than the general public. For these families, taking unpaid leave can mean putting their families’ economic security at risk. The FAMILY Act helps ensure that these families not need to choose between forfeiting needed pay, and the health of a loved one.

For more information contact:

Emily Hecht-McGowan, Director of Public Policy at emily.hecht@familyequality.org