NEW AMERICA

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Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Senator Bill Cassidy
Representative Chrissy Houlahan
Representative Stephanie Bice
Members of the Bicameral, Bipartisan Working Group on Paid Leave
U.S. Congress
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators and Representatives:

Thank you to this bipartisan, bicameral working group for soliciting information related to "solutions to expand access to paid leave for all Americans." Your inquiry is timely and important. As you know, U.S. workers' inability to access paid leave harms their economic security and health, and the security and health of children and older and disabled loved ones; depresses labor force participation, and reduces retirement security – and, conversely, there is an ample and growing body of evidence on the value of paid leave to individuals, families, and businesses, and the contribution paid leave makes in growing a stronger and more inclusive economy.

The working group's solutions-focused effort builds on a rich record of bipartisan federal government activity to explore and expand paid leave access over more than a decade.[1] Your

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[1] Among evidence of bipartisan commitments from presidential administrations and agencies:

- Presidential budgets from the Obama administration, the Trump administration and the Biden administration each making commitments to paid leave in various forms and amounts;
- Two rounds of state paid leave grants provided through the Obama Administration's Department of Labor to aid in the analysis and evaluation of state paid leave programs, resulting in studies that led to the creation of new paid leave programs in several states and the District of Columbia and program updates in others;
- RFIs issued by the Trump Department of Labor in 2020 (one through the Women's Bureau and another focused on FMLA through the Wage & Hour Division), which culminated in many thoughtful responses submitted from a range of stakeholders representing a range of business, worker, and community interests;
- Technical assistance, outreach and education focused on employers by both the Trump and Biden Department of Treasury and IRS focused on the 45S paid leave tax credits; and
- The Department of Labor's Microsimulation model, which was initiated in 2017 and was updated in 2023, spanning two presidential administrations.

Congressional action has included passage of the paid leave tax credit as part of the JCTA in 2017, the Federal Employees Paid Leave Act the NDAA in 2019, and House passage of a comprehensive paid leave program as part of the Build Back Better Act in 2021. Additionally, congressional hearings and other fact-finding efforts, initiated by both Democrats and Republicans, include:

bipartisan work also builds on Congress' success in establishing paid parental leave for the federal workforce in the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act. A [GAO report](#) released in January 2024 shows that the program established by the Federal Employees Parental Leave Act served an estimated 4% of the federal workforce between the start of benefits in October 2020 and July 2022, which means that more than one hundred thousand new birthing, adoptive, and foster parents were able to spend the important early months of their child's lives bonding and providing care – and then returning to work.

My fervent hope is that Congress will soon take a next step to expand access to all U.S. workers to provide the predictability, certainty, and security that all stakeholders – individuals, families, and employers alike – need and deserve and that survey after survey demonstrate the American public wants. The hyperlinks in this letter are external resources with more information. I'm also attaching prior congressional testimony and other resources, which include citations and references to additional sources.

It is my pleasure to share evidence- and data-based insights with you, gathered over 14+ years of intensive focus as an advocate, policy expert, and researcher on this topic. Over that time period:

- The number of U.S. states with paid leave programs has grown from [two states to 13 states and the District of Columbia](#), covering tens of millions of working people and their loved ones. The country's oldest programs, enacted in 2002 (California) and 2008 (New Jersey), have each been expanded multiple times to better serve the needs of the states' workforce and families, as well as the needs of businesses seeking to ensure adequate leave for their workers. Wage replacement levels have become more reflective of what workers' need in recently-adopted state programs and financing in all states has been remarkably stable (read more about benefits, funding and coverage [here](#)). In addition, some [states](#) and [municipalities](#) have adopted parental and family leave policies for public sector workers, recognizing the value of paid leave for their employees and for themselves as employers in attracting and retaining workers.
- Workers' access through private sector policies has increased dramatically, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics – from [10% in 2010 to 27% in 2023](#) – but even this progress overall means that an estimated 106 million civilian workers, and an estimated 92 million private sector workers (73% of the workforce), is without dedicated paid family leave at their jobs. In addition, progress has been incredibly uneven, with the

- Prior Senate hearings and roundtables on paid family and medical leave, which include: [Senate Finance Committee](#), October 2023; [Senate HELP Committee](#), July 2021; [Senate Finance Bipartisan Working Group on Paid Leave](#), June 2020; [Senate Finance Subcommittee on Social Security, Pensions and Family Policy](#), July 2018; [Senate HELP Subcommittee on Children and Families](#), July 2014.
- Prior House hearings, which include: [House Oversight and Reform Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus](#), July 2022; [House Ways & Means Markup of the Build Back Better Act](#), Sept. 2021; [House Oversight and Reform](#), July 2021; [House Ways & Means Committee](#), April 2021; [House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Worker Protections](#), February 2020; [House Ways & Means Committee](#), January 2020; [House Ways & Means Committee](#), May 2019; [House Education and the Workforce HELP Subcommittee](#), July 2018; [House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Worker Protections, April 2017](#); [House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Worker Protections](#).

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highest-wage workers [10 times more likely](#) than the lowest-wage workers in the private sector to have employer-provided paid family leave in 2023 – a gap that has grown rather than shrunk.

- Voluntary approaches, intended to incentivize employers to provide paid leave, have also been established during this time period, both federally through the 45S employer tax credit which has been available since 2018, and in states that have either created voluntary pools that private-sector employers can buy into or provided state insurance agencies the ability to authorize the sale of private paid family leave insurance.

This current landscape, characterized by a range of private-sector approaches, a variety of public policies at the state level, and workers' and business' hardships in the absence of access to paid leave, provides a rich body of evidence to inform assessments of the problem nationally and evaluate federal policy alternatives.

In general, any federal solutions should aim to **expand access to paid leave equitably** across demographic groups, regions, industries, and occupations so that all workers have baseline access; they should seek to **streamline processes for both workers and employers without diminishing benefits, rights, and protections** that states have created; and they should **invest in outreach and education** to ensure all stakeholders know about and are easily able to access benefits, rights, and protections. Federal solutions should aim to **build on state successes and incorporate corrective lessons** from less successful interventions. And federal solutions should address America's paid leave gaps with **funding levels that are commensurate with the scope of the problem**. Calibrating federal policy interventions to address stakeholders' various concerns should aim to provide **security, predictability, clarity, and affordability** for all parties.

With those principles in mind, here are my responses to each of the questions the working group has posed.

1. **What should the federal role be, if any, in providing, promoting, and/or incentivizing paid leave? And how should this interact with the role of state government programs, and/or employer programs.**

   The federal government should play in a central role in building on the status quo, where workers' access to paid leave – and business' provision of paid leave voluntarily – varies by state, industry, job type, and more.

   The cleanest and most straightforward solution – and the solution that offers the greatest level of predictability and clarity to all stakeholders – is the creation of a national paid family and medical leave program that establishes accessible, job-protected baseline parental, family caregiving and personal medical leave benefits covering all working people and a range of family relationships. A federal program can be

harmonized with state programs as long as rights, benefits, and protections established by state programs are not diminished. This would ensure stability and minimize confusion for workers and employers alike.

A federal policy could address in a coordinated and clear way the need that working people have for paid family and medical leave <u>and</u> that employers have for certainty and clarity. With this goal in mind, it should be within the realm of political feasibility both to create a role for the federal government in ensuring workers have access to paid leave and to assign public resources to meeting that goal at the scale of the problem.

In addition to coordinating with state plans, a federal baseline program should be coordinated with existing plans of employers, provided employer plans meet or exceed both the federal program thresholds and the state thresholds in the states in which they operate. Within this framework, employers could be permitted to create a national benefit structure that meets the need of their workforce. For multi-state employers, perhaps Congress could consider a rule that would permit multi-state employers to meet both the federal standard and the standards of the most generous state in which they operate when crafting a plan to cover all of their workers nationwide, as long as there is a means of enforcement for meeting those standards for workers in every state.

Some may say this type of national baseline program is too expensive and unrealistic. But the status quo creates uncertainty, instability, precarity, and expense for all parties. Additional piecemeal solutions to encourage or incentivize access to paid leave in the absence of a baseline program to guarantee paid leave to everyone will only perpetuate uncertainty, instability and precarity for all concerned – and will almost certainly continue to mean that some workers are covered while many are not. Businesses will continue to face many different rules where states have innovated and the uncertainty associated with additional state innovation; they will have to bear costs of providing leave on their own where policies don't exist and they choose to do so on their own; and, alternatively, they will bear turnover costs and suffer workforce shortages when workers leave because of the lack of paid leave.

In the absence of a comprehensive national program, the federal government could create administrative infrastructure and funding for states to continue to adopt their own programs, perhaps by creating a central benefits administration hub for states that cannot build their own programs and by helping to finance start-up costs. Receipt of federal funds for the creation of new state programs should be contingent on state programs adopting parameters consistent with existing comprehensive state programs in terms of the reasons for leave, the family members covered, duration, eligibility rules, and employment protections. The drawback of this approach, however, is that it would contribute to an expanded variety of policies rather than creating more consistency and still leave millions of workers without paid leave.

2. **What types of leave should a potential federal program cover, at what length, and why? How should different types of leave be prioritized? Should different types of leave be treated differently or does doing so create adverse effects?**

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) covers three types of leave for a uniform 12-week period of time, with other time periods applicable to certain types of military caregiving leave. A federal paid leave program should do the same, and at a minimum should guarantee 12 weeks for the range of FMLA reasons, which both employers and workers are used to. States have already implemented policies that meet most or all these key FMLA uses and none offer less than the three main FMLA reasons (parental, family caregiving and personal medical leave.

With respect to leave duration, the majority of states – especially newer states – offer one period or range of leave for all purposes (and some go beyond, to include safe leave for domestic violence and sexual assault survivors) (see table of leave durations and purposes [here](#)). There is ample guidance for this design and a dearth of information to suggest that this model is problematic for employers. In fact, anything less than comprehensive coverage for a uniform and meaningful period of time period would create more variation that could add to, rather than reduce, confusion.

There are good reasons to offer the same duration of leave for all purposes and to workers of all genders: Consistency among co-workers and, more broadly, within the workforce for different types of workers with different types of need for paid leave; simplicity for understanding what a program provides; disincentives for employers to discriminate against women, older workers, and workers who have health issues; and alignment with existing federal law. Gender equity must be a goal in determining durations as well; we know from [European leave programs](#) that vastly disparate maternity and paternity leaves (and the absence of paternity leave entirely) can adversely affect women's employment and earnings and reinforce outdated ideas of women as innate caregivers.

To be clear, 12 weeks might not be the optimal duration for any one purpose, as "optimal" can be measured in many different ways. For parental leave for example, one could look, [as my New America colleagues did](#), at infant health, maternal health, gender equity, and economic outcomes, and arrive at a range of months from 12 weeks to 12 months, depending on the goal. The same is be true of caregiving leaves and medical leaves, where most people use a far shorter duration of leave than state paid leave programs provide but where flexibility exists to use the maximum period when a health provider and worker certify that it is necessary. But 12 weeks is a familiar U.S. standard and it should be a politically feasible minimum duration for a federal baseline program.

3. **Please describe your recommended framework/s, focusing on what you believe could be a bipartisan and passable solution/s to expanding paid leave nationally.**

   In order to create access to paid family and medical leave for all working people in the United States; to minimize confusion and maximize consistency for all stakeholders; and to fill sizable inequities across states, in [rural areas](#), and across [industries, wage levels, and job types](#), Congress should adopt a comprehensive, universal national paid family and medical leave program. This program should be modeled on successful state programs in the states in which paid leave programs operate. These social insurance programs function as public-private partnerships – using pooled funds from workers and businesses and, in most programs, public administrative infrastructure to enable all eligible, qualifying workers to have access to paid leave without requiring employers to provide the benefit on a 1:1 basis or to administer the leave.

   What's "passable on a bipartisan basis" should be defined by evidence and experience; research on benefits, direct costs, and the myriad indirect costs and externalities of the status quo; and the scope of people's and business' (especially small business') needs and limitations. Comprehensive, universal social insurance programs were passed with bipartisan legislative support and business community engagement in [Washington](#) (2017) and [Oregon](#) (2019), signed by a Republican Governor in [Massachusetts](#) (2018), and passed with bipartisan support by 57% of voters at the ballot in [Colorado](#) (2020). A social insurance bill currently pending in the Pennsylvania legislature also has bipartisan legislative support in both chambers ([House](#), [Senate](#)).

   Although there are unique challenges with obtaining bipartisan support for substantial new policies in Congress in the current climate, incrementalism could have unintended consequences by, for example, exacerbating disparities and sowing additional complexity and confusion for workers and employers alike, while possibly having little impact. It is true that incremental solutions could expand access to some people, but the scale of need, the unevenness of private sector and state-level access, and the cost of inaction nationally – along with possible additional harm – requires more than incrementalism.

4. **Please describe alternative ways any proposed framework can be financed, including possible payfors. What financial mechanisms should be considered to expand paid leave?**

   Every state program is funded through employee, employer or shared payroll deductions of 1.1% or less (see this [table](#)). This is a fair, equitable, and low-cost way for all stakeholders to share the cost of paid leave. Contrary to possible concerns about "runaway" costs, payroll contribution rates in states often go down year to year – as often or more often than they go up.

For example, in 2024:

- **Rates decreased** in New Jersey, where the worker contribution for medical leave was eliminated in 2023 and 2024 and workers' family leave contributions rates dropped from .14% in 2022 to .06% in 2023 though rose again slightly but only to .09% in 2024. In the District of Columbia, contribution rates dropped from .62% to .26% in July 2022 and stayed there for 2023 and 2024. In New York, employee contribution rates for paid family leave dropped from .511% in 2022 to .455% in 2023 and dropped again to .373% in 2024. Washington's rate shared by employees and employers, which increased in 2023 from .6% to .8%, dropped in 2024 to .74%.
- **Rates increased** in California in 2024, from .9% in 2023 to 1.1% in 2024, and the taxable wage base expanded too, in order to prepare for a major benefits expansion in 2025 (up to 52 weeks of medical leave and 8 weeks of family leave with up to 90% wage replacement in 2025 vs. 60% for most workers under current law). In Massachusetts, rates increased from .63% in 2023 to .88% in 2024 – still well under 1% – and they had been reduced from .68% to 63% between 2022 and 2023.

Although payroll deductions are the path that states have chosen, other forms of revenue could also finance a national paid leave benefit. Raising corporate tax rates, raising taxes on the wealthiest taxpayers, taxing large financial transactions, or other means of raising general revenue are possible. Another approach could be to require businesses to provide paid leave as a mandatory requirement or to participate in a shared, public pool – but actuarial analysis would need to be done and rules created to ensure that this does not become a high-risk pool with adverse selection, volatility, and high rates. A universal program would be a better, more secure, and more stable approach and likely a more cost-effective one for employers as well. What's most important is ensuring access for all workers, no matter their employer, job, or state.

5. **How can proposed paid leave frameworks avoid creating unintended distortions, such as marriage penalties, reductions of private sector paid leave coverage, etc.?**

I'm not aware of evidence that any of the state paid leave programs have created unintended consequences like these. To ensure that is true in a national program, I would recommend following the design of state programs – paid leave that is available equally to all workers, in equal durations, for all major FMLA reasons (to avoid gender-based penalties and parent-based penalties, which would disproportionately affect women of reproductive age); applying leave rights and benefits on a per-worker basis rather than a per-household basis (so that households with married couples receive the same per-worker benefit as unmarried couples or partners living separately); and allowing integration of publicly-facilitated or required paid leave and employer's voluntary benefits.

With respect to the concern about reductions of private-sector coverage, there's no quantitative or qualitative evidence that leave benefits provided by the private sector have been reduced by the availability of public paid leave in any state where paid leave is available through a state paid leave program. Companies with generous paid leave benefits (a small minority of all U.S. companies) use them to attract and retain talent. Some of the country's largest and most prosperous businesses, with some of the best benefits, are located in states that guarantee paid leave, including California, New York, and Washington. Companies have announced new policies and expansions in these states and in other paid leave states. They offer these benefits because they're good for business – recruiting, attraction, retention – and do so regardless of what the state policy context is.

6. **Should government support for paid leave be focused only on the most vulnerable individuals in our society, or on all Americans regardless of need?**

A program should be available to everyone in the labor force or with recent labor force attachment, with benefit amounts scaled in proportion to need. While people with higher incomes and savings may be better able to absorb the shock of a workplace leave, no one should have to face the reality of going for weeks or months without pay while they are caring for a loved one, welcoming a new child, or addressing a personal health crisis. Scaling benefits, so that workers with lower wages in their recent earnings history receive a higher share of their typical earnings, and capping benefits for those with higher typical earnings and greater access to supplementary employer-provided benefits, are key ways to address this.

In states with paid leave programs, benefit rates vary from a low of 70% in California (soon to be raised to 90%) and Rhode Island to 100% in Oregon for low-wage workers. State wage replacement rates average of around two-thirds of usual/recent pay for workers making 100% of the state average weekly wage, capped at an amount that is typically indexed to the state average weekly wage (or a fraction or multiple thereof) or sometimes indexed to a multiple of minimum wage. Benefit caps range from a low of $941/week in Connecticut to $1651/week in California in 2024 (see table with sample wage replacement amounts and rates and maximum benefit amounts, and a graph comparing benefit rates by earnings level for all states).

If anything, creating a means-tested program or other limits on eligibility could have perverse, unintended consequences, including for employers who might choose to keep a workers' wages low in order to ensure the worker qualifies for a public paid leave program and does not need employer-provided paid leave. Conversely, where an employer does not provide paid leave to its workforce, a means-tested public program could create strange inequalities within workplaces, where low-wage workers are eligible for public paid leave but the higher-paid workers that sit next to them have nothing.

Means-testing also adds to the administrative cost and complexity of public programs, which places burdens on government administrators, is costly for taxpayers, and may dissuade potential applicants from seeking benefits.

7. **What supports do small and mid-sized businesses need from the federal government to provide paid leave to workers?**

A federal policy should offer businesses both the administrative infrastructure to facilitate workers' access to paid leave as well as a cost-effective means of providing it. Small Business Association programs could also help businesses learn best practices for managing leave and workers' returns to work after their leaves; finding replacement workers; information about program specifics; and more. Businesses and government together can be partners in ensuring universal access to paid leave.

In states, the social insurance framework is effective. In states with the longest-standing paid leave programs small employers are supportive of paid leave programs and most report positive or neutral effects on productivity, morale, loyalty, and the ease of dealing with employees' leaves (see studies evidence on each of [California](#), [New Jersey](#), [Rhode Island](#), and [New York](#)). In New York and New Jersey, academic research shows that small businesses [became even more favorable](#) toward paid leave programs in those states over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that larger employers who had an employee take a paid leave became more favorable too. A federal program that is well-designed and well-administered, with ample education, technical assistance, and outreach to businesses, would likely receive even more positive marks.

In contrast, experience with the federal 45S tax credit suggests that a voluntary incentive has not proven effective in meaningfully expanding access or supporting businesses in providing paid leave. In the 2020 tax year, just [1230 firms nationwide filed claims](#) for 45S credits, according to a review of the most IRS recent data – a tiny proportion of all firms in the country. In addition, an overwhelming share of federal dollars spent on the credit flowed to higher-revenue firms: of the $101 million given to firms in tax credits between July 2020 and June 2021, $89 million went to pay 180 claims from firms with over $1 billion in revenue, whereas the remaining $12 million went to the other 1000+ lower-revenue, perhaps smaller, firms. [Modifying the credit](#) to be permanent, adding education and outreach, and allowing employers in paid leave states and multi-state employers that operate in both paid leave states and other states might help around the edges, but this tax credit does not seem to offer promise for dramatically changing the landscape.

The data the IRS collects also provides no information as to whether the firms receiving federal dollars through 45S tax credits are using the credit to expand access to new benefits or simply to offset existing costs of paid leave they had already been providing;

there is also no information about the number of employees who have been able to take leave or the quality of the leave they are provided by duration, purpose or wage replacement rate (the 45S credit is available for employer plans that offer as little as two weeks of leave at 50 percent pay, for as few as one FMLA purpose). More data collection is needed for any kind of meaningful analysis.

Similarly, early evidence from states that have established voluntary paid leave programs similarly shows a lack of impact: Only a [tiny fraction](#) of the New Hampshire private sector workforce works for employers that have opted into the Granite State Plan; while most are small employers, this solution does not seem to be attractive enough to incentivize participation – and the benefits a worker receives are as little as six weeks of leave at 60% of their pay, which is far less generous than comprehensive state programs. In Virginia, [just one insurer](#) is offering paid family leave as a product more than 18 months after the legislature approved the insurance commission's ability to authorize the sale of these products, and there's no information on whether employers have actually purchased this insurance product. Vermont has recently started a program like New Hampshire's, and several other states ([Alabama](#), [Arkansas](#), [Florida](#), [Tennessee](#), and [Texas](#)) adopted the Virginia approach in 2023 based on an insurance industry model bill. 2024 should provide more information on the efficacy of these two voluntary models.

It is also worth noting that the support some businesses may need to ensure their workers can access paid leave is not limited to small- and medium size businesses – larger businesses are not providing paid leave to most workers. According to 2023, [Bureau of Labor Statistics data](#), only 41% of workers in businesses with 500 or more employees have paid family leave – meaning the vast majority (59%) do not – and only 55% of businesses with 500 or more employees have access to short-term disability insurance. A solution that addresses the needs of all businesses – and sets federal baseline expectations and guarantees is required.

8. **What does the research say about the impact of providing paid leave on worker health, job satisfaction, economic mobility, child development, breastfeeding rates and related health outcomes, fertility rate, infant mortality, elderly health, public assistance levels, family income, and recruitment and retention efforts?**

    Well-designed paid leave supports [financial security of families](#), [women's labor force participation rate](#) and [women's earnings](#), and paid leave for men supports both women's earnings and [fathers' engagement](#) with their children. Paid leave is also associated with improved health, including improved [infant](#) and [child development](#), increased [breastfeeding rates](#) and [early-month immunizations](#) among first children, reduced [infant mortality](#), improved [maternal health](#), better [ability to manage and afford cancer treatment](#) and a [better likelihood of cancer patients staying employed](#), and reduced [occupational injuries](#). On maternal health, a [brand new paper](#) from Obstetrics and

Gynecology, published this month, shows positive effects on breastfeeding, depression and post-partum visits for women in paid leave states, including larger effects on populations eligible for Medicaid.

Paid leave also benefits businesses, from [supporting recruitment](#) to reduced turnover to increased productivity and [firm performance](#). Access to paid leave also associated with [reduced use of public assistance programs](#) and receipt of lower dollar amounts in public assistance; paid sick leave has also been linked to [less need for other forms of public assistance](#).

The U.S. paid leave status quo [costs our economy nearly $22.6 billion](#) each year in lost wages alone. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, if the United States had the labor force participation among women of economic peers Canada and Germany, supported by policies like paid leave, it would [generate an additional $775 billion per year](#) in additional economic activity.

From an economic mobility perspective, creating a national program would reduce job-lock both within states and between states, allowing workers more freedom and flexibility to change employers and states of residence more easily.

For more research and dozens of citations, please see the attached testimony.

9. **What lessons should the federal government learn from successful or failed attempts at expanding paid leave in U.S. states or other countries**?

Much of the discussion above speaks to both successes and inadequacies in existing policy approaches, and here are some additional points:

- Gender equal paid leave for [a reasonable duration](#) has the best chance of working as intended without adverse consequences; unpaid leave alone and very long paid leaves for women only have adverse effects on women's employment.
- [Wage replacement should be set at 80% of typical wages](#) of above to maximize utilization and gender equity in use; leave programs that do not offer wage replacement rates or benefit levels that are high enough are underutilized and contribute to gender gaps.
- All but one state paid leave program covers a broader range of family members than the FMLA (some included extended family from the beginning and others, including California and New Jersey, amended their programs) (table [here](#)), and a federal policy should do the same to address the needs of many different types of communities and family care configurations'

- [Job protection](#) that runs concurrently with paid leave benefits is critically important; offering paid leave benefits but without job security means workers who are not covered by FMLA cannot use the paid leave they have securely.
- Outreach and education must be incorporated into a program and funded; [research by my New America colleagues on New Jersey's program](#) surfaced important lessons on this point as well as on the importance of streamlining program applications, for example.
- Concerns raised by business interest groups and concerned employers in states prior to the passage of comprehensive paid family and medical leave programs about cost, disruption, and misuse [have not materialized](#) – and businesses that claimed they would have to close or lay people off have not done so as a result of paid leave programs' passage and implementation.

10. What other information would you like us to consider as we attempt to chart a bipartisan path forward?

The public – across all major demographic, regional and political groups – believes that people need access to paid family and medical leave. This is issue is not partisan for people, it is a matter of values, well-being, health, and economics. Majorities of Americans support a federal role in establishing a national program, and they would be willing to pay more than a social insurance program would cost, and it is only when survey questions misstate the annual cost of a program to each worker that majority support erodes. People are less favorable towards state-by-state solutions and incremental voluntary incentives. Polling data showing support goes back more than a decade, and similar results exist in public polling, bipartisan polling, non-partisan polling and polling by each party. Some of the data to back this up is proprietary and some is public or shareable. Please reach out for specifics, but know that the general point is that the public needs, wants, and supports this, and will feel more favorably toward lawmakers that take action. If government is by and for the people, paid leave is an issue on which it is past time for major national progress.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective and please know that I am eager to help you develop policy solutions. Please reach out any time with questions or further information.

Respectfully,

Vicki Shabo
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