



May 10, 2023

The Honorable Jason Dawkins
Labor & Industry Committee, Chair
PA House of Representatives
150 Main Capitol Building
P.O. Box 202179
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2179

Chairman Dawkins,

I am writing to urge you, as chairman of the House Labor & Industry Committee, to schedule a vote for House Bill 181, the Family Care Act. HB181 would create a critical pro-business and pro-family statewide paid family and medical leave program in Pennsylvania for the first time in our Commonwealth's history. This program will allow working Pennsylvanians to remain financially stable while not having to choose between losing much-needed income and taking care of their family at a vulnerable time of need.

By establishing a paid family medical leave program in Pennsylvania, the Family Care Act would allow:

- parents to be there for their newborn following birth or care for their child during an illness
- family members to provide critical care for elderly loved ones
- workers to care for themselves following a major surgery

Currently, two-thirds, about 4.3 million, of Pennsylvania's workers don't have access to paid family and medical leave. At a time when Pennsylvania's businesses are facing hiring challenges, passing a paid family and medical leave program would be both a pro-business and pro-family solution to push our economy forward. In the 11 states, along with Washington D.C., with existing paid leave laws, paid leave has been proven to boost productivity and profits, help businesses recruit the best employees, and save businesses money by improving retention and reducing costly turnover. With bordering states, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland, already passing paid leave laws, Pennsylvania's employers, along with Pennsylvania's economy, are getting left behind in what is an increasingly competitive economic environment.

Without access to paid leave, Pennsylvanians are often caught having to choose between their work and parental responsibilities. As research has shown, parental bonding in the first few months is critical to child development. On average, over 130,000 new children are born each year in Pennsylvania with each parent in the house reporting to work in about 72 percent of all

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households with children, totaling more than 1,825,000 homes. Without paid leave, at the most critical time of their child's development, parents often find themselves making impossible choices between paying the bills and raising their children.

These forced decisions are hurting Pennsylvania's economy and workers. Access to a paid leave program would mean parents, especially women, aren't forced to leave the labor force to care for their families. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows that if women in Pennsylvania participated in the labor force at the same rate as women in countries with paid leave, there would be an estimated 107,000 additional workers and \$3.7 billion more wages earned statewide.

It is clear that creating a paid family and medical leave program would be an essential investment in Pennsylvania's businesses and families. I am urging you to make sure that working Pennsylvanians get access to a paid family and medical leave program that they have earned and that will also put Pennsylvania's businesses at a competitive advantage. It's time for the General Assembly to put families and Pennsylvania's businesses first by passing the Family Care Act (HB181).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Donna Cooper', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Donna Cooper, Executive Director
Children First