

Time to Care

A Guide for Equipping Christians to
Shape Paid Family Leave Policy

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Introduction

Perhaps you have had a new baby or had a loved one who needed your care but could barely spare the time. Perhaps you had the opportunity to spend months or years with young children and want others to have that blessing — and you are willing to do something about it. Or perhaps you simply want more families to flourish. If so, then this guide is for you.

Although the U.S. has long distinguished itself as one of the few nations around the globe that does not guarantee paid family parental leave, there are signs that this reality could change. A host of new ideas and policies have been proposed to create a system of paid family leave for all families. Six states have enacted paid family leave for their residents. At least three proposals have been introduced in Congress. Members of both political parties are expressing a commitment to paid family leave. Business leaders are beginning to take note of the cost of doing nothing in terms of lost talent and exhausted workers.

But it takes a lot of work to move from idea to reality, particularly when it comes to public policy. This is where you come in. Advancing a more just community where families flourish requires action.

This guide aims to help Christians advocate for paid family leave in a principled way. We provide concrete tools, like sample letters and emails to public office-holders (p. [23](#)).

But we also help you go deeper and understand the current landscape for families and family leave. We explain why too many families are missing out on family time and why improved public policies like paid family leave could help support these families. (p. [6](#))

Finally, in keeping with the Center for Public Justice's philosophy of rooting policy work in Christian principles rather than narrow categories of right and left, we offer six principles that we think should be part of any paid family leave policy. These principles could apply to policies offered by cities, states, or the federal government. If you live in a city or state where paid family leave policies have been proposed, you can use our principles and policy analysis tools to assess that legislation and discern where you stand. Or you can use this tool to assess new federal proposals for paid leave.

Thank you for taking time to use this guide and for speaking up for families.

More resources on family-supportive policies are available at www.FamiliesValued.org.

Helping Work and Family Work Together



SECTION OVERVIEW

This section explores the pressures of work on family time. We also reflect on God's good design for family life and the role of family in creation.

Everyone wishes for more time. And, everyone knows it is good for a mother to have time with a newborn baby or for a father to have time with his foster child. There are seasons of life when family is everything. But, in our current economy, work and family are sometimes experienced in conflict. This is not the way it is supposed to be.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Families face impossible choices.

Jane,¹ mother of two, recently gave birth to a daughter. For the last two years she has worked at a call center. She continued to work there until she went into labor. “My work doesn’t pay for maternity leave,” Jane explained. “They told me they would hold my job if I returned within the month.” Although Jane wanted more time with her family and new daughter, she felt compelled to return to work even sooner than directed. Days after giving birth, Jane shared, “...[I]f I don’t go back to work in two weeks, we will not have enough money to pay our electric bill. . . I really wanted to breastfeed my baby this time, but I don’t think I can do it if I go back to work. It makes me sad.”

Alicia, mother of three, is a daycare teacher. She gave birth to her third child by cesarean delivery, but was told her job would only be held for two weeks. As a compromise for her return, her newborn son would receive free childcare at the facility. It was the only child care affordable and available to her family. So Alicia reluctantly returned to work, still recovering from the delivery, with her newborn son in tow. Her infant contracted respiratory syncytial virus infection (RSV), to which very young infants — especially those six months and younger — are susceptible.¹ The infection resulted in her infant son being taken to the emergency room and hospitalized in the NICU for a week. Now a 1-year-old, her son continues to have respiratory issues as a result of the infection.

“If I don’t go back to work in two weeks, we will not have enough money to pay our electric bill.”

¹ Identifying details have been changed in the family stories to protect the privacy of each family.



GOD'S GOOD DESIGN

Families are supposed to flourish.

Scripture affirms three truths important to this topic: First, work was created for humanity and is inherently good. Second, rest is part of a healthy rhythm of life as demonstrated by God's decision to rest on the seventh day of creation, and as articulated as a core command to Moses. Finally, family is the most basic institution, woven into the fabric of creation, with unique, God-given responsibilities. Among these responsibilities is to care for its members. This truth is embodied through Christ's entrance into the world as a vulnerable infant in need of parental care. Together, the activities of work, rest, and care honor God's creational design and intent for human flourishing. For Jane and Alicia, work and their financial need to work limited both their ability to rest and care.

Families are irreplaceable.

There are seasons of life when family care is irreplaceable. The season of childbirth and infant bonding is one such season. For young children, their world is completely comprised of relationships. Their development, including their brain development, is dependent on stable, interactive relationships.² Additionally, the American Academy of Pediatrics,³ the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,⁴ as well as international public health organizations⁵ all recommend that, for optimal growth, health, and development, infants be exclusively breastfed for their first six months.

Paid family leave helps families flourish.

Policies that support families — “family-supportive policies” — can enable workers to participate fully in work, rest, and caregiving. One specific type of family-supportive policy is paid family leave. Paid family leave is paid time off of work to provide for a variety of caregiving needs including welcoming a new child, elder care, or caring for a seriously ill family member.

Although caring for a newborn child is one situation in which paid family leave is crucial, there are other times when the care of a loved one is irreplaceable. Susan experienced one of these seasons. Susan's teenage son began experiencing debilitating migraines during his sophomore year of high school. He began missing school frequently. His doctor determined the cause was depression and anxiety. “When I learned the root cause of the migraines was depression and anxiety, I was afraid to leave him home,” explained Susan. “I didn't think he would commit suicide, but I wasn't going to take that chance.” After he missed school for two consecutive weeks, Susan realized she needed more than sick and personal days. “I realized something in my life had to give. . . His safety was all on me. . . I realized an extended leave from work was what I needed for my well-being and for my family.” When she explained her situation to her employer, she learned about a paid discretionary leave policy that was available to her. She was able to take time off from work and still receive her pay. Because of her workplace policy, she was able to care for her son and know she could cover her bills. Within four weeks, her son's health had stabilized, and Susan returned to work.

Our Current Context



SECTION OVERVIEW

This section reviews the current workplace and policy landscape. This analysis illuminates workers in today's contemporary economy who cannot secure time from work to attend to critical seasons in family life. This analysis also clarifies how improved paid family leave policies can help workers secure time to care.

Imagine you are about to have a baby or need to attend to a family member who is undergoing surgery. Or perhaps a loved one has entered hospice and wants to designate you as their caregiver. Can you take time off from work for family? Your answer depends on (1) whether you will have a job to return to and (2) whether you can afford not to work. We unpack these two elements below in order to explain the current workplace and policy landscape and why improving paid family leave policies will help all families.

EXISTING POLICY LANDSCAPE AND ITS CHALLENGES

Taking time off without losing your job.

The federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is the only federal policy protecting workers' time for parental and family care. A little over half (59%) of the workforce is covered by FMLA.⁶ It provides 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for the birth, bonding, fostering, or adoption of a new child, caring for an ill family member, and caring for self during a serious illness. To be eligible, your employer must have at least 50 employees. There are some employers who choose to protect workers' jobs during periods of family care even when the workplace is too small to fall under the FMLA, but many workers do not qualify for this job-protected leave.

Affording to take time off for family care.

The Family and Medical Leave Act provides 12 weeks of *unpaid* family leave. Only a portion of eligible workers can afford to use it because they lack sufficient employer-provided paid time off or enough personal savings to make ends meet while they are away from work. Only 17% of workers have access to a formal paid family leave program.⁷ 62% of households with incomes below \$30,000 receive no pay while on leave.⁸

Below are some of the sources of paid leave and explanations for why many households, even when eligible for FMLA, cannot afford 12 weeks of unpaid family leave.

EMPLOYER-PROVIDED PAID FAMILY LEAVE: Some workers are able to receive short-term disability insurance coverage through their employer. Short-term disability provides a percentage of pay during a worker's own medical recovery — including recovery from childbirth.

It will not cover other forms of family leave: caring for a family member as Susan did, caregiving at end of life, paternity leave, or time off to a child.

As already noted, there are employers who provide paid family leave. But, many employers either choose not to or cannot afford to provide such a benefit on their own. Some argue that, instead of a paid family leave benefit, workers should use paid sick leave and vacation days for family care. On average, workers have access to 11 paid vacation days⁹ and eight paid sick days.¹⁰ In reality, this may not be enough time when there is an emergency. Additionally, many workers do not have access to these paid benefits either. Of the lowest quarter of wage earners, only about half have access to paid sick leave (47%) or paid vacations (53%).¹¹ Part-time and contingent workers have less access to paid benefits compared with their full-time counterparts. 40% of part-time workers have paid sick leave and 38% have paid vacations.¹² An additional concern with depending on paid vacation and sick days to cover family leave is that exhausting these benefits will leave workers without time for their own rest and recovery days or periodic medical visits after the initial leave period. Paid vacation and sick days have a good, important function separate from supporting their workers who attend to family care.

STATE-BASED FAMILY LEAVE: Several states provide a public paid family leave program. See “[State Paid Family Leave Policies](#)” in “[Resources](#)” at the end of this guide for details and links to learn more.

USING PERSONAL SAVINGS TO COVER FAMILY LEAVE: Given all the gaps in the resources above, many people would need to rely on their own savings during any family leave they take from work. Although some households have sufficient family wealth to cover a period of family leave, many do not. And households can cover far less than they would like to. For example, over half of parents who took parental leave say they took less time off from work than needed; 69% of those parents said they took less time off from work than needed because they could not afford to lose more income.¹³

WHY MANY FAMILIES CANNOT COVER FAMILY LEAVE WITH PERSONAL SAVINGS

- 62% of households with incomes below \$30,000 received no pay while on leave.¹⁴
- Only 35% of married couples with children have at least three months of liquid savings.¹⁵
- Three in 10 adults have family income that varies from month to month; 1 in 10 experience hardship as a result.¹⁶
- Families of color are less likely to have household wealth to cover family leave. In 2016, the median wealth of white households was \$171,000 — 10 times the wealth of black households (\$17,100), and eight times that of Hispanic households (\$20,600).¹⁷

Decoding Policy



SECTION OVERVIEW

This section identifies core moral principles of a paid family leave policy and provides a tool to help readers use core principles to analyze different policy proposals.

For many, advocacy seems like something experts and lobbyists do. Advocacy requires a knowledge of policy, and policy seems too complicated, complex, and conflict-ridden for us to engage. Sometimes, policy feels like something that happens to us.

But, as Christians, many of us also have a conviction that citizenship is our responsibility. We wonder if there is another way to do politics. We want our faith to shape our presence in the public square. We want policy that embodies and pursues justice. We want our culture to care about families.

THE RIGHT ROLE OF POLICY

Sometimes we know that something has to change, but we aren't sure if government should be a part of that change. Our perspective — what we call “public justice” — recognizes that a healthy society is comprised of diverse institutions, each with valuable roles. Families, congregations and religious life, schools, the arts, and other institutions each make unique contributions to human flourishing. Government's valuable role is helping these diverse institutions work well together. For example, government cannot and should not replicate the work of families. But, government should foster conditions in which families can fulfill their calling.

For families to flourish, every institution in society must act to support and protect family time. In [Time to Flourish: Protecting Families' Time for Work and Caregiving](#), the Center for Public Justice urged public and private actors to uphold family life. To accomplish this, we recommend:

1. Workplaces and public policy alike should protect workers' time to care for family members.
2. Workplaces, especially faith-based organizations, should align family-supportive values and workplace practices.
3. Policymakers should develop a system of paid family leave so that all workers can attend to seasons of family responsibility.

If Jane and Alicia had access to paid family leave and were assured of their ability to take time off, then they would have had the time they and their babies needed. As Christians, we have the ability to articulate and analyze potential policies in a nuanced and principled way. Public policies can either hurt or help families, so it is important that Christians not only reach

out through individual acts of service, but also shape a more just legal and cultural environment for families. Christian principles should form us more profoundly than the categories of right and left, liberal and conservative.

A PRINCIPLED APPROACH

Principles that should shape paid family leave policy.

As Christians, we are motivated to advocate for paid family leave policy because of God's desire for families to be healthy and for work to be dignifying. If our advocacy is successful, then policy will reflect moral, scriptural principles, including respect for the dignity of all workers, honoring caregiving, providing practical support, addressing system challenges, supporting economic vitality, and stewarding financial resources responsibly.

Advocacy and policy work is always a process of discernment and balancing principles, and thus should be a process built on prayers for wisdom and guidance as we — citizens and policymakers — try to connect sound principles with what we know about our fallen world. The chart beginning on the following page describes six principles that we think should be reflected in a paid family leave public policy as well as the scriptural and factual grounding that illuminates the importance of the principle. All of these principles are grounded in two core, motivating principles: healthy families and the dignity of work.

Motivating Principles:

Healthy Families – Families are the foundation of healthy communities and societies. (“Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters. Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile.” Jeremiah 29:5-7)

Dignity of Work – God's design for human flourishing includes a proper understanding that there is inherent dignity in work of all types. (“The Lord God took man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” Genesis 2:15)

Applied Principle	Description	Relevant Facts
Dignity of All Workers	<p>Each worker reflects the Imago Dei and should be treated in a way that enables and protects family time for both men and women and for workers of all job types and status.</p> <p>The Parable of the Vineyard, Matthew 20:1-16</p>	<p>Currently, many workers lack access to benefits that would enable time off from work for family care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 17% of all civilian workers have access to paid family leave.¹⁸ • Of the lowest quarter of wage earners, only about half have access to paid sick leave (47%) or paid vacations (53%). Only 8% these workers have access to paid family leave.¹⁹ • Part-time and contingent workers have less access to paid benefits compared with their full-time counterparts. 40% of part time workers have paid sick leave, 38% have paid vacations, and 7% have paid family leave.²⁰
Honoring Caregiving	<p>Family caregiving — be it for a new child or an ailing or aging family member — is worthy work that should be recognized and supported.</p> <p>“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted.” Ecclesiastes 3:1-2</p>	<p>Caregivers have an inherent worth to family well-being and are important for the thriving of society.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fathers who take at least two weeks of leave for a new child are more likely to be actively involved in their child’s care nine months after birth.²¹ • About 40 million Americans provide 37 billion hours of unpaid care to adults with limitations in daily activities each year. The estimated economic value of their unpaid contributions was about \$470 billion in 2013.²²

Applied Principle	Description	Relevant Facts
Practical Support	<p>Assistance to workers should be effective in enabling family caregiving at crucial life inflection points.</p> <p>“This is what the Lord Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.’” Zechariah 7:9</p>	<p>Too small a benefit may not provide enough support to enable families to take time off. Workers without job protection may not be able to utilize a paid family leave benefit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over half of parents who took parental leave say they took less time off from work than needed; 69% of those parents said they could not afford to lose more income.²³ • California’s paid family leave program has low take-up rates (25-40%).²⁴ Reasons for not utilizing CA paid family leave include lack of awareness of the program, too small of a monetary benefit to be able to afford the time off, and fear related to an unhappy employer and the possibility of being fired.²⁵
Address System Challenges	<p>Address barriers to family stability and prevent family disintegration for households with low income or without the advantage of family wealth.</p> <p>“I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy.” Psalm 140:12</p>	<p>In the absence of strong paid leave benefits, many households need to utilize household savings or family wealth. But some households lack this financial buffer. A key consideration here are lower wealth levels for lower-income, African American and Latino households, creating financial pressure to substitute work for crucial family care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over half (62%) of households with incomes below \$30,000 received no pay while on leave.²⁶ • In 2016, the median wealth of white households was \$171,000—10 times the wealth of black households (\$17,100), and eight times that of Hispanic households (\$20,600).²⁷

Applied Principle	Description	Relevant Facts
Support Economic Vitality	Policy should support healthy businesses and nonprofit enterprises. There should be a special emphasis on preserving nonprofit, religious, and small business organizations' abilities to flourish in creating more family-supportive workplaces.	<p>Paid family leave can help support workplace productivity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to paid leave increases worker retention for high and low paying jobs.²⁸
	The Parable of the Talents, Matthew 25:14-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In California, most employers report that paid family leave had either a positive effect or no noticeable effect on productivity (89%), profitability/performance (91%), turnover (96%), and employee morale (99%).²⁹
Financial Stewardship	<p>Steward well both resources provided and costs allocated for family-supportive policies and practices.</p> <p>"Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds; for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations." Proverbs 27:23-24</p>	<p>Policy should reflect a reasonable portion of public spending.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal proposals for paid family leave are estimated to cost between \$28.3 billion and eight billion per year, depending on the size and design of the program. At the high end, this amounts to less than 5% of our current Social Security program.³⁰

PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

Assess paid family leave policy with a principled approach.

A variety of policy proposals for paid family leave have and will be offered at the state and federal level. Below is a chart discerning how our principles may impact the design and application of a paid family leave policy. We recommend praying through each principle. As noted earlier, advocacy and policy work is always a process of discernment. Therefore, the chart below includes space for your own assessment as you pray and consider the policy provisions that might support each principle.

Applied Principle	Questions to ask of a policy	What to look for: Policy provisions that support this principle	Notes for your own assessment
Dignity of All Workers	What kind of workers are eligible to access paid family leave? Does the policy cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contract workers,• Self-employed workers, or• Part-time workers?	✓ A wide array of work counts toward eligibility for paid leave. The system for proving paid leave is accessible to many types of workers. For example, the Social Security system covers those who are employees (full or part-time) as well as contract and self-employed workers.	
Honoring Caregiving	Are both men and women covered by the policy? What kind of caregiving is covered? Does the policy benefit families who choose to have one parent stay home and provide care?	✓ Enables both men and women to take time for family caregiving. ✓ Eligibility requirements are flexible enough to enable those who have been in and out of the paid workforce due to caregiving responsibilities to qualify for paid family leave.	

Applied Principle	Questions to ask of a policy	What to look for: Policy provisions that support this principle	Notes for your own assessment
Practical Support	<p>What percentage of a worker's wages does the policy cover?</p> <p>How many weeks is the benefit?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ One key bipartisan proposal recommends providing at least 70% of wages up to a cap of \$600 per week.³¹ ✓ Includes job protection for the 40% of workers not currently covered by FMLA.³² 	
Address System Challenges	How does the policy affect low-income households?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provides a higher percentage wage replacement for low-wage workers than high-wage workers. 	
Support Economic Vitality	How does the policy affect small employers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Utilizes a funding mechanism that enables small employers and nonprofits to provide family leave benefits affordably without significant financial burden. 	
Financial Stewardship	How will the program be funded?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Utilizes a funding mechanism that fully pays for the program, preventing a financial deficit. 	

Make a Difference



SECTION OVERVIEW

This section articulates practical steps you can take to advocate for paid family leave policy in your local community, state, and national government. Prayer should be embedded in our personal and communal discernment processes, and it should ground your advocacy. Tools and tip sheets can be located in the [Resources](#) section.

God's call to citizenship manifests in many ways, and one important way is advocacy. Through advocacy, we can do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God in the public square. It is also one way in which we can love our neighbors well and participate in God's work of redeeming every area of life.

It is possible to create a community that better upholds, even if not perfectly, the family responsibilities of all workers. However, advancing a more just community that allows for all families to flourish requires action. If citizens fail to engage in the change process, then nothing will change. Families will continue to struggle and fracture. The most effective action involves contacting your state legislature or members of Congress. The more people — friends, colleagues, and community members — who join you, the more effective the action will be. Therefore, we suggest an advocacy process that involves three steps: 1) reflecting on your own story and motivations; 2) engaging friends, allies, and community; 3) taking action.

The very first action step of advocacy is articulating why you care about a policy.

If you are not sure if you should advocate for a federal or state policy, [contact Families Valued](#), an initiative of the Center for Public Justice. We can help you research the policy proposals in your state or at the federal level, and pray with you through the discernment process.

YOU HAVE A STORY

Your experience matters. Workplaces and public policies impact our abilities to take care of family, and your story can help communicate that. Think about: Why is this topic important to you? What challenge did you or someone you love face? What happened? What did you learn? These are important details.

Consider your story, and identify the key principles and facts that you want to share with friends, neighbors, and leaders and policymakers in your community.

Taking the time to consider and pray through your story, and craft how you want to share your story, is important and helpful as you begin your advocacy journey. One storyteller describes her experience writing down her story this way: "It was helpful for me to put the experience into words. Memories get fuzzy. Sometimes I feel like I focus on the rough edges in my experience and don't always recognize God's narrative over my story."

Developing Your Story

Step 1: Choose one specific part of your experience that illustrates the importance of work policies and practices that are family-supportive.

Step 2: Brainstorm.

- What values do you want to communicate?
 - What was the challenge you were facing?
 - What choice did you make?
 - What was the outcome of making that choice?
 - What details can you share or emphasize in your story to make it most effective?
- When you tell your story, include these evocative details into all parts of your story.

Step 3: Write it down.

Step 4: Share your story with friends, family, and us: www.familiesvalued.org/connect/share-your-story.

Adapted from Ganz, "Public Narrative"



Go Deeper

For support writing and sharing your story, check out our tool "[Steps to Writing Your Story](#)" in [Resources](#).

RALLY YOUR FRIENDS AND ALLIES

Assess your community and lay the groundwork.

Pray and consider: Who do I know who cares about this topic? Who do I know who might have a similar story to mine? Are there paid family leave proposals currently in your community? Who are the other people and groups championing paid family leave in your community?

When you identify other people and groups who might support paid family leave, get in touch and request to meet. Face-to-face meetings between two people are typically most effective in forming intentional relationships. It is important to acknowledge that supporters of paid family leave come from a wide range of perspectives. Sometimes it is hard to discern whether to work with another advocate or group if you disagree on other areas. Face-to-face meetings can help your discernment process, especially as you discuss what motivates each of you to care about paid family leave.



TIP SHEET: Relational Meeting Guide: Elements & Sample Questions
Suggestions for forming intentional relationships within your community.

Build support in your community.

You wrote down your story. Now share it with your group of allies: the friends and neighbors you found who also care about supporting families. Pray and consider: What do your stories have in common? What are common themes and values you share? What types of assistance or support would have better helped you or someone you love when you needed time to care for a family member?

Share your story and vision for paid family leave with friends, neighbors, and local community members. Utilize community events and social media to share your concern for families and invite others to participate with you. Tell your pastor about how paid family leave can strengthen families. Tell your friend with a small business how a paid family leave public policy doesn't have to hurt business owners, but can instead help them take care of and retain their employees. Not everyone will want to participate in the same way, or at all. As Christians, we acknowledge families have inherent value, but we don't necessarily reach the same conclusions or feel called to advocate for policies in the same way. The process of discernment sometimes results in people exercising their citizenship in different ways.

As you build support and invite others to join your group of allies, remind your friends, neighbors, and fellow community members that policy impacts our lives every day. That's why principles matter. Share the [Statement of Principles for Paid Family Leave](#), and ask if they agree with them. If they do, ask them to sign on. Having a visual representation of community support for a policy will be helpful when you are talking to leaders and policymakers.



TIP SHEET: Listening and Responding

Suggestions for listening well to members and different perspectives in your community.

Work together with your friends and allies.

As you meet and build intentional relationships with other Christians who care about family and work policies, invite them to convene collectively on the topic. Consider: What are our strengths, capacities, and questions? What are we ready to do next?

When you convene with other Christians, take time to pray together for just government, flourishing families, and discernment. At the start of any group process, we pray to remind ourselves of God's sovereignty and provision of wisdom. We pray for God's guidance, inviting the Holy Spirit to reveal God's intentions and enable us to fulfill them.



Go Deeper

Set up a **Political Discipleship** group focused on advancing a family-supportive policy, such as paid family leave. Political Discipleship is a small group curriculum during which participants explore the purpose of politics and learn how to exercise political power well by doing politics together. Participants may hold similar political points of view or very different ones. The curriculum is designed so that each group decides in advance on its issue of focus. Rally your friends and neighbors interested in family-supportive policies and walk through this study together.

The curriculum is free and available to interested groups through the Center for Public Justice. Learn more about running a Political Discipleship group by emailing PoliticalDiscipleship@CPJustice.org.

TAKE ACTION

There are many ways to contact policymakers. To get to know a policymaker — and have the policymaker get to know you — you might have to utilize multiple methods.

Send an email to a policymaker about paid family leave.

To find information on how to write to a specific policymaker, review their website or the website of their local government.

SAMPLE EMAIL

Dear [title and name of policymaker],

I write today to urge you to support paid family leave, specifically [policy]. There is currently bipartisan momentum for good reason. In order to thrive, families need time together. Unfortunately, families who are most likely to struggle financially and least likely to be provided paid leave through their workplace to care for family members.

- *An estimated 20% of mothers with a new child return to work within days or weeks of their child's birth.*
- *Fathers who take two or more weeks off after the birth of a child are more involved in that infant's care than fathers who take no leave.*
- *62% of households with incomes below \$30,000 received no pay while on leave.*

A paid family leave policy can protect and strengthen all families, especially workers in low-wage jobs. It is also important that it doesn't overburden small business and nonprofits. Because of these principles, I urge you to support [policy].

Sincerely,

*Your Name
Address
Town, State, Zip
Phone Number*

Call the office of your policymaker about paid family leave.

You can contact your policymaker by phone. To find their office number, review their website or the website of the governing body. You may be asked to speak with an aide, especially for federal representatives. When speaking, be polite and concise.

SAMPLE PHONE CALL

“Hello, this is [name] and I live in [town]. I would like to speak to the staffer who works on paid family leave or other family policy.

“I am calling about paid family leave. A paid family leave policy can protect and strengthen families. I would like [name of policymaker] to support a policy that helps all families, especially workers in low-wage jobs. It is also important to me that small business and nonprofits are not overburdened. Because of these principles, I request [policymaker] to support [policy].

“Thank you.”

Meet with policymakers about paid family leave.

Meeting with a policymaker’s office can be very impactful. Prior to requesting a meeting, consider rallying additional friends and advocates who signed the statement of principles to join you for the meeting. As noted earlier, advocacy is most effective when done by a group. Collectively identify one or two goals your group wants to accomplish and one or two good questions your group wants to pose to your policymaker. To request a meeting, identify potential dates and times that will work the group, and request a meeting by email or through your policymaker’s website. Follow up the request with a phone call.



TIP SHEET: Setting up a Meeting with a Public Office-Holder

Suggestions for successfully organizing a meeting with a policymaker.

SAMPLE MEETING REQUEST

I am a member of a group of citizens in [city/town/neighborhood]. We are affiliated with [name of church or churches or community groups]. We all share a commitment, as Christians, to pursuing justice and educating both ourselves and our neighbors about critical public issues. We are particularly interested in paid family leave.

We would like to meet with you to share our understanding of this issue and ask you several questions about it. We would like to understand your priorities and decisions with respect to this issue and the principles that guide your governance.

We would like to request a meeting with you on (DATE AND TIME). Attending the meeting will be _____ (name of the attendees, their town/neighborhood, and church/organizational affiliation). Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only.

Because our group's purpose involves educating ourselves and others, we expect the meeting will be a public meeting with the results shared at events and online publications affiliated with our group.

Please contact me at either (PHONE NUMBER/EMAIL ADDRESS) to confirm our appointment or discuss alternative times. We look forward to meeting with you.

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State Paid Family Leave Policies

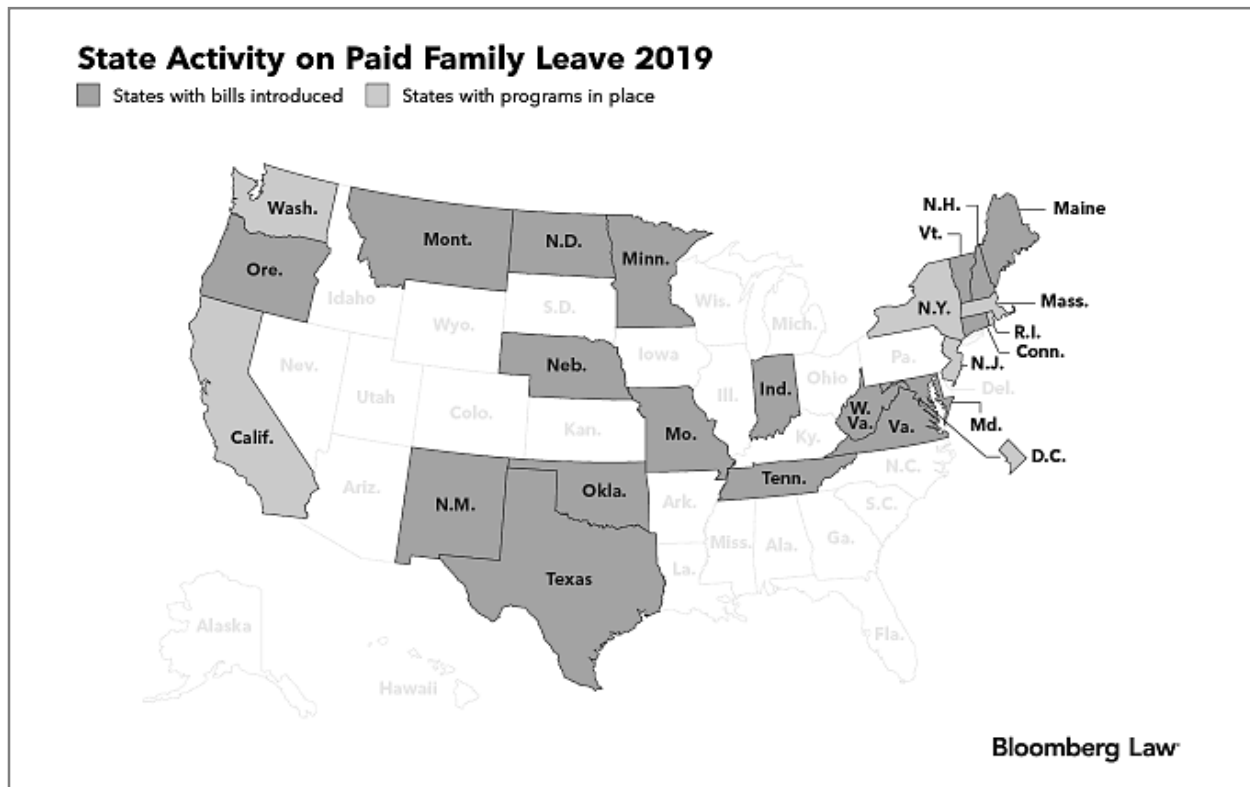


Image Source: <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/daily-labor-report/paid-family-medical-leave-teed-up-in-states-across-u-s>

California

Six weeks of paid family leave concurrent with FMLA.

District of Columbia

Eight weeks of paid parental leave. Six weeks of paid family care leave. Administration of paid benefits will not begin until July 2020.

New Jersey

Six weeks paid family leave for child, partner, spouse, or parent and concurrent with other family leave programs.

New York

Eight weeks paid time off for parenting and caregiving. Increasing to 12 weeks in 2020.

Rhode Island

Four weeks of paid family leave for parenting and caregiving.

Washington

12 weeks of paid family leave for parenting and caregiving. Administration of benefits will not begin until January 2020.

Steps to Writing Your Story

Step 1: Gather Information

Think back to your experience, and brainstorm as much detail as you can remember. These details will bring the reader into your story with you, and show them what your experience was like.

- Who all was involved in the main event you are writing about? What role did your partner, workplace, and/or extended family play?
- What challenges did you face? What caused family stress?
- How did you respond to the challenge or stress?
- What happened after you responded?
- What was hard and/or stressful for you personally? What went well?

Step 2: Organize Your Story

The focus point of your story is the event or challenge you faced. However, it is helpful to think through the order things happened. Also, order the details you brainstormed.

Step 3: Write it Down A good goal for your story is to be about 800-1,200 words.

Introduction: Hook your reader by describing the challenge you faced or introducing yourself/your family to the reader.

Body: Explain and provide context for your challenge. Remember to include the details you brainstormed!

- Describe the family event that forms the crux of your experience. Who was involved?
- What led to the main challenge you are writing about?
- Describe the challenge.
- How did you feel about the situation? What did you do about the challenge? How did you decide to face it?

Conclusion: Looking back on the situation, what would have helped your family? What support do you wish you had? Based on your experience, what do you wish for other families? How do you wish your community or country was different to make sure all families have a little more time to care for each other?

Step 4: Share with friends. Share with us.

Your experience matters. Workplaces and public policies impact our ability to take care of family, and your story can help communicate that. We are currently focused on issues of family leave, child care, and the social safety net. But, we value every story in high esteem and will store your contact information for future projects. When you share your story, please include as much as you can about how your workplace and/or how these issues have impacted you and your family. However, it doesn't have to be perfect. Your story will remain confidential, and we may reach out to you to learn more. Share your story here:

www.familiesvalued.org/connect/share-your-story.

Statement of Principles for Paid Family Leave



To Whom It May Concern:

The Christian tradition sees both family life and work as two God-given spheres of human responsibility. We believe God's design for human flourishing includes healthy families and a proper understanding that there is inherent dignity in work of all types. The family is the most basic human institution. We recognize family's inherent God-given value, as well as its value to a healthy society. The inherent value of work is also prevalent throughout scripture. In Genesis 2 we are told that humanity was placed in the Garden of Eden to "work it and take care of it".

Yet, many families experience work and family life as sources of constant conflict.

Because family is foundational to society and contributes to strong communities, we believe that community institutions, including places of work, have a responsibility to respect and support family life, as does government. We believe that in order for government to uphold a just society, it must uphold the integrity and social viability of all families. The rhythms of family life should be honored, and all people should be able to attend to seasons of family caregiving.

Because of these foundational beliefs, we believe that our community needs paid family leave. There are many ways to design such a policy, and we may not agree on all of the details, but we are united around the following principles that should inform the policy design and application.

- 1. Respect the dignity of all workers.** Each worker reflects the Imago Dei and should be treated in a way that enables and protects family time for both men and women and for workers of all job types and status. (The Parable of the Vineyard. Matthew 20:1-16)
- 2. Honor caregiving.** Family caregiving — be it for a new child, an ailing or aging family member — is worthy work that should be recognized and supported. ("For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted." Ecclesiastes 3:1-2)
- 3. Provide practical support.** Workplace family support should be effective in meeting the urgent support needs of families at crucial life inflection points. ("This is what the Lord Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.'" Zechariah 7:9)
- 4. Address system challenges.** Address barriers to family stability and prevent family disintegration for households with low income or without the advantage of family

wealth. ("I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy." Psalm 140:12)

5. **Support economic vitality.** Public policy should support the flourishing of employers providing family-supportive policies and practices. There should be a special emphasis on preserving nonprofit, religious, and small business organizations' ability to flourish in providing family-supports. ("Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously." 2 Corinthians 9:6)
6. **Responsibly steward finances.** Steward well both resources provided and costs allocated for family supportive policies and practices. (The Parable of the Talents. Matthew 25:14-30)

As Christians, our faith calls us to exercise our political authority. The purpose of government is to advance flourishing. Family flourishing requires protected time together, particularly during seasons and events of critical family care. In order to have a vibrant, pluralist economy of workplaces, employers need support in helping families have protected time together. Our desire to see our community flourish moves us to support a principled paid family leave policy in our community.

Sincerely,

[Sign on with friends and allies below]

Tip Sheets

These tip sheets are from the **Political Discipleship** curriculum. Political Discipleship is a small group curriculum during which participants explore the purpose of politics and learn how to exercise political power well by doing politics together. Participants may hold similar political points of view or very different ones. The curriculum is designed so that each group decides in advance on its issue of focus. Rally your friends and neighbors interested in family-supportive policies and walk through this study together.

The curriculum is free and available to interested groups through the Center for Public Justice. Learn more about running a Political Discipleship group by emailing PoliticalDiscipleship@CPJustice.org.

Relational Meeting Guide: Elements & Sample Questions

- **Introduce the purpose of your meeting.**
Name the intention, goal, or project that motivates your meeting.
"I am a member of Resurrection Church in this community, part of a church working group trying to better understand this community, and I am eager to hear your perspective...." OR *"As a fellow member of your political discipleship group, I would like to better understand how we are called to work on together..."*
- **Briefly share your own story**, why you are interested in meeting with the other person, and how you got involved in the issue.
- **Ask open-ended questions** that elicit the other person's story.
The most productive open-ended questions often begin with something specific rather than abstract.
"How long have you (or your family) lived in this community?" "Where do you consider home?" "Why did you make the choice to... study physics, or run for city council?" (By contrast: "What do you think about our community?" or "What do you think about XYZ issue?" will elicit opinions rather than stories.)
- **Ask questions about the person's interests, concerns, joys and passions.**
"What do you look forward to?" "What are you worried about?" "What really bothers you about this situation?" "What are you excited about relative to this situation?"
- **Ask probing questions that dig deeper:** "Why?" or "Can you share an example?"
If appropriate, invite the person to work together with you, if you do have a common interest.
- **Be curious, but not nosy.**

Close by offering and asking for a commitment.

"Our church will be holding a forum about this issue, will you come?" or "I think there may something we can do together, can you meet again?"

Listening and Responding

- Be a listening presence, centering attention on the storyteller rather than yourself.
- Attend to the image of God in the other.
- Respond with observations rather than judgments ("It really moved me when you said...." or "I notice you mentioned x...").
- Get curious (curious questions often start with the word "why...").
- Don't pose questions or make comments to prove your own point, but rather to better understand the storyteller.
- Formulate observations and questions in the service of the storyteller, questions that help the storyteller to become more clear on his or her story and motivations.

Setting up a Meeting with a Public Office-Holder

Identify possible dates that the whole group is available for a meeting. The meeting manager may want to use [doodle.com](#) or another easy scheduling tool.

Gather the street addresses and relevant affiliations for members of your group. The public office-holder will want to know that at least a majority of your group resides in the community they represent.

Decide where you would like to hold the meeting. The meeting could take place at the government office, or your group could propose an alternate location that accommodates your group well: a community center, a church, or other office space.

Prepare a brief email or letter explaining your group and its purpose and conveying the request for a meeting. Draw on your group's description of who they are from Session Four when crafting the letter. See the next page for a sample meeting request.

Call the person's office to discuss scheduling a meeting. Ask for a staff member who handles scheduling. The person may take the request on the phone or direct you to an email address or an online meeting request form. If you are working with a larger office such as a member of Congress or a larger government agency, ask for the name and email address of any staff members who work on your issue.

Submit the written request via email, online request form, or through the mail.

Follow up with a phone call to the scheduler if you have not received a response or confirmation after five days.

Time the meetings around the legislative calendar. If your group intends to meet with a member of Congress, they may need to wait until a break in the congressional calendar. During these recesses (also called non-legislative days), members of Congress are sometimes available to meet with constituents in their home state.

Congressional calendars are often available at www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/Calendars+and+Schedules.

Information on state legislators and state legislative calendars can be found at the nonprofit, Open States project openstates.org/.

Prayers for Government

O Lord our Governor, bless the leaders of our land, that we may be a people at peace among ourselves and a blessing to other nations of the earth.

To the President and members of the Cabinet, to Governors of States, Mayors of Cities, and to all in administrative authority, grant wisdom and grace in the exercise of their duties.

To Senators and Representatives, and those who make our laws in States, Cities, and Towns, give courage, wisdom, and foresight to provide for the needs of all our people, and to fulfill our obligations in the community of nations.

To the Judges and officers of our Courts, give understanding and integrity that human rights may be safeguarded and justice served.

And finally, teach our people to rely on your strength and to accept their responsibilities to their fellow citizens, that they may elect trustworthy leaders and make wise decisions for the well-being of our society; that we may serve you faithfully in our generation and honor your holy Name.

For yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Amen.

(Adapted from the Book of Common Prayer, 1979)

Creator God,
thank you for providing us
with the gift to share our talents.

Provide our community, our nation, our world
the fortitude to provide work for all
which is decent and fair.

Make us faithful stewards
of your creation
to enhance the human dignity
of our global family.

We ask this in the name of Jesus,
who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit
now and forever.

Amen.

*(From Being Neighbor: The Catechism and Social Justice,
USCCB, April 1998)*

Further Reading

Families Valued Newsletter

This monthly newsletter provides resources for Christian citizens, employers, and policymakers. This newsletter is also a tool to stay informed on the latest of work and family in the news and highlights family stories. Sign up for monthly updates at www.familiesvalued.org/connect.

Family-Supportive Practices in the Sacred Sector

This research report disseminates the results of a survey conducted by researchers at Seattle Pacific University's Center on Integrity in Business, in partnership with the Center for Public Justice. Researchers surveyed family-supportive practices in four types of faith-based workplaces: education, healthcare, charitable social service providers, and congregations. The report is available at www.familiesvalued.org/resources-workplaces/.

Political Discipleship: A Group Study for Christian Citizenship

This small group curriculum is "a study for people who distrust politics, yet feel convicted about citizenship." Support for running a group as well as the curriculum are available by emailing PoliticalDiscipleship@cpjustice.org.

Time to Care: A Series on Family and the Pressures of Time

This series of articles, published by Shared Justice, features the voices of families. Through vulnerable conversation and reflection, Time to Care considers how the sphere of work has encroached on the family, and helps readers collectively discern what justice requires to ensure all families have the freedom to flourish. The series is available at www.sharedjustice.org/timetocare.

Time to Flourish: Protecting Families' Time for Work and Care

This report explores the topic of time as it relates to family life and family stress. Drawing upon theological foundations, weaving in historical and current context, and telling the stories of families from all walks of life, this report presents a framework for which employers and policymakers can consider how institutions can contribute to the flourishing of workplaces and, foundationally, families. The report is available at www.familiesvalued.org/resources/time-to-flourish.

What Justice Requires: Paid Family Leave

This report introduces the need for paid family leave to support low-income families, articulates a Christian framework for approaching the issue, and helps readers take action through various institutions. The report is available at www.sharedjustice.org/paidfamilyleave.

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The Center for Public Justice (CPJ) is an independent, non-partisan, Christian organization devoted to policy research and civic education. Our mission is to equip citizens, develop leaders, and shape policy to serve God, advance justice and transform public life. Learn more at CPJustice.org.



Families Valued, an initiative of CPJ, researches and promotes public policies and workplace practices that honor God's call to both work and family life. Learn more at FamiliesValued.org.



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