



May 7, 2019

The Honorable Maria Elena Durazo
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee #4
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Paid Family Leave Outreach

Dear Senator Durazo:

We are writing to request a one-time General Fund allocation of \$5 million to the Employment Development Department to fund California's Paid Family Leave Program outreach. This funding should be directed toward outreach efforts focused on baby bonding, and caregiver and military exigency leave, with priority given to reaching communities that have historically low utilization rates of the Paid Family Leave Program.

Fifteen years ago, California launched the nation's first Paid Family Leave Program, an entirely employee-funded wage replacement program that provides six weeks of partial wage replacement for bonding with a new baby or caring for a seriously ill family member. Even though nearly all who work for private employers pay into the program, awareness of the program has been historically low. A 2013 study reported less than half of survey respondents (42.7 percent) had heard of the program. Awareness was lowest among Latinos, low-wage workers, younger employees, and immigrants.

The societal benefits of Paid Family Leave are extensive, and benefit individuals while easing burdens on state resources.

Frequent, nurturing, parent-child interactions are key to strong brain development in the first 3 months of life. Research makes it clear the first months and years are crucial to life success, with over 80 percent of a child's total brain development happening in the first 3 years. Experts, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, recommend healthy full-term infants not be enrolled in child care until they are at least 12 weeks old due to rapid developmental changes. Working parents must have the ability to spend the first key months of each child's life establishing a foundation for life success. Family leave is not a luxury—it's a major biological and developmental benefit for each child.

Numerous studies have found a strong correlation between parental leave and maternal and child health. Longer maternity leave is associated with decreased maternal depression. Maternity leave has been shown to increase the rate and duration of breastfeeding, which is associated with improved maternal and child health, as well as increased immunizations and preventive health services. Improved uptake of family leave usage would likely result in significant healthcare cost savings as well as cost savings on state-supported childcare.

Governor Newsom is proposing lengthening Paid Family Leave time, and Senator Jackson has a bill this year, SB 135, to strengthen the California Family Rights Act, which acts as the job-protection foundation for the Paid Family Leave Program and would build in greater flexibility for more family members and chosen family to utilize the program.

With the Legislature and the public in support, numerous efforts are underway to strengthen our state's family leave laws. We believe it is time for an additional infusion of funds to reenergize Paid Family Leave Outreach efforts, and that education on job protection and return-to-work rights should be among those messages communicated to Californians in order to allay fears and increase program usage.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

California Child Care Resource & Referral Network
Child Care Law Center
Children Now
Common Sense Kids Action
EveryChild California
First 5 California
Head Start California
Kidango
Parent Voices

cc: The Honorable Hannah Beth Jackson, California State Senate
Senate President Pro Tempore Toni Atkins
The Honorable Holly Mitchell, California State Senate
California Employment Lawyers Association
Legal Aid at Work