Designing an Inclusive and Equitable Paid Family and Medical Leave Program

Sapna Mehta, November 2023
The Paid Leave Landscape

Paid Family Leave Rare and Inequitable, 2023

- National Average
- Service Workers
- Management & Professional Workers
- Wages in Lowest 10%
- Wages in Highest 10%
- Small Employer
- Large Employer
The Paid Leave Landscape

Most Workers Lack Paid Medical Leave, 2023

[Bar chart showing the percentage of workers with paid medical leave by category: National Average, Service Workers, Management & Professional Workers, Wages in Lowest 10%, Wages in Highest 10%, Small Employer, Large Employer.]
Designing an Inclusive & Equitable Paid Leave Program

• Provide 12 weeks of paid leave to address the full range of serious personal and family medical and caregiving needs people experience:
  – Heal from a serious personal medical condition, care for a seriously ill loved one or a new child, safe leave and military caregiving

• Cover all working people.
  – Full-time or part-time; private, non-profit, public sector;* traditional employees, self-employed, small business owners, independent workers - 1099 workers; people with intermittent work histories; and people with limited earnings but recent attachment to the labor force.
Designing an Equitable Program Cont.

Provide progressive wage replacement.

- Workers in the lowest paid jobs are least likely to have access to any paid leave and most in need of a federal program, but the least likely to be able to afford to take leave if it requires taking a pay cut.

- Most states will soon replace between 80-100% of wages for low-paid workers.
Designing an Equitable Program Cont.

● Include family caregiving rules that reflect the diversity of caregiving relationships people have.
  ○ “An individual related to the employee by blood or affinity whose close association the employee shows to be the equivalent of those family relationships.”

● Ensure that paid leave is job protected. Working people must feel secure using the paid leave that is available without risking job loss. There must also be robust anti-retaliation protections in place.
Designing an Equitable Program Cont.

- Develop a sustainable funding model
  - Employer/employee payroll deductions

- Public Administration of benefits
  Especially for key program components like claims and benefits processing and determinations
  ○ Privatization unlikely to save $
Designing an Equitable Program Cont.

- Include sufficient resources for implementation.
  - Funding for education and outreach, research and evaluation, and enforcement

- Ensure working people are part of the implementation design.
  - Worker Advisory Committee
Equity Matters
Lessons for Paid Family and Medical Leave

Pronita Gupta, Michael Vorgetts & Gayle Goldin
June 2021
Panelists

- Jason Barrett, Washington Employment and Security Department
- Erin Choquette, Connecticut Paid Leave Authority
- Debra Fitzpatrick, Children’s Defense Fund-Minnesota
- Holly Low, New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- Courtney Veronneau, Family Forward Oregon