

WAWH: Family & Medical Leave Insurance Act applauded by women's health advocates

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Proposal would help working women achieve economic security and work-family balance

Madison, WI - The Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) applauds state Representative Sondy Pope and state Senator Janis Ringhand for introducing legislation that would create a Wisconsin Family and Medical Leave Insurance program. If enacted, this bill would empower Wisconsin workers to take paid time off from work to take care of their own serious health condition, to care for a family member with a serious health condition, or care for a new baby.

"Access to paid family and medical leave is an extremely important issue for working women and has a direct impact on their personal and financial health," said Sara Finger, WAWH Executive Director. "The burden of our inadequate paid family and medical leave policies falls disproportionately on women, who make up nearly half of the workforce but are still far more likely than men to care for children or other family members who are sick."

The United States is the only industrialized country in the world that doesn't provide workers with any type of guaranteed paid leave. Nationally, only 12% of workers have paid family leave through their employers and fewer than 40% have personal

medical leave through an employer-provided short-term disability program. As a result, workers who take time off to take care for themselves or their families often face a significant loss of income. Other states and local governments have begun to effectively address this issue. California, New Jersey, Rhode Island, New York, and Washington, D.C. have enacted public insurance programs that provide workers with paid family leave.

Even though both the federal and Wisconsin Family Medical Leave Acts (FMLA's) do provide important protections to some workers, a significant portion of the workforce is not eligible for these protections and both FMLA's only provide for unpaid time off, which is not financially possible for many employees.

“There is a real thirst from the American public for policies that will improve the health and economic security of working families. The public wants action, not just rhetoric, which will address the very real concerns they have about their ability to achieve economic security and balance the often competing demands they face between work and their families. Our elected leaders should heed these demands and seize the opportunity presented by this proposal to help ensure that we have a healthy workforce and healthy economy,” added Finger.

For more information and statistics regarding how paid family and medical leave insurance would benefit workers, and women workers in particular, see page 9 of the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health [*Proactive Policy Prescription to Improve the Health and Well Being of Women and Girls in Wisconsin.*](#)