

TO: Mayor Paul Soglin and Members of the City of Madison Common Council  
FROM: Mike Murray, Policy Director, Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health  
RE: Testimony in Support of Creating Paid Family and Medical Leave Policies for Municipal Employees  
Date: March 6, 2018

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### **Introduction**

Mayor Soglin and members of the Common Council, thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony regarding the City of Madison's consideration of whether to implement a paid family and medical leave policy for municipal employees. As an organization that works to make Wisconsin an environment where all women have the opportunity to realize their optimal health, safety, and economic security at every stage of life, the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) strongly supports efforts to increase access to paid leave.

WAWH is encouraged by the City's consideration of this proposal, as paid family and medical leave is widely recognized one of the most effective policies for promoting healthy workers, families, and communities. In fact, the benefits of paid leave are so well demonstrated that there are only two countries in the entire world that do not guarantee workers with access to some form of paid leave. Unfortunately, the United States is one of those two countries. Given the complete federal and state inaction on paid leave policies and the fact that Wisconsin state law currently prohibits<sup>1</sup> local governments from passing generally applicable paid leave policies, it is particularly important that forward thinking local governments take action to increase access to paid leave where possible. Enacting such policies at the local level is not only the right thing to do for municipal workers, but also serves as a positive example for private sector businesses and other local governments.

### **Why Paid Family and Medical Leave is Important to Women**

While paid family and medical leave is certainly important for all workers, it is particularly important to women in the modern American workplace.

Women currently make up approximately half of the U.S. workforce (about 48% in Wisconsin), but are still far more likely than men to be the primary caregivers for children<sup>2</sup>. This is true even in relationships where both partners work. This dynamic is especially problematic for lower-wage workers, who are far less likely to have access to paid family or medical leave<sup>3</sup> and are much less likely to be able to afford to take any unpaid leave for which they might be eligible. As women are highly overrepresented in low-wage occupations—approximately two-thirds of low-wage jobs in Wisconsin are held by women<sup>4</sup>—the creation of inclusive and generous paid family and medical leave policies is critically important to the well-being of these women and their families.

These statistics have very real consequences for working women, who are often forced to make incredibly difficult decisions about whether to take time off of work in order to care for themselves or their family members. Nearly 1 in 5 low-wage working moms have lost a job due to their own illness or to care for a sick

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<sup>1</sup> <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2011/related/lcactmemo/act016.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> National Women's Law Center, *Underpaid and Overloaded: Women in Low-Wage Jobs*, [http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/final\\_nwlc\\_lowwagereport2014.pdf](http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/final_nwlc_lowwagereport2014.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> National Women's Law Center, *Moving Women and Families Forward: A State Roadmap to Economic Justice*, [http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/nwlc\\_economicroadmap2015.pdf](http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/nwlc_economicroadmap2015.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> See *Underpaid and Overloaded: Women in Low-Wage Jobs*

child,<sup>5</sup> which is a truly sad statistic when one takes a moment to reflect on the stress these decisions put on women and their families. Enacting and implementing effective paid leave policies for municipal workers would demonstrate that the City of Madison is serious about doing what is within its power to promote family-friendly policies that help ensure that workers are not forced to choose between paying their bills and caring for themselves or their families.

The issue of paid leave is becoming more urgent by the day, as our communities and families are relying on working women more than ever. Working mothers are the primary breadwinner in 41 percent of families with children, and they are co-breadwinners—bringing in between 25 percent and 50 percent of family earnings—in another 22 percent of these families<sup>6</sup>. That's 63 percent of families that rely on women as either a primary or significant breadwinner. Many of these families cannot afford to lose income when working women have to take time off to care for themselves or their families.

Paid parental leave also provides tangible health benefits to infants, children, and mothers<sup>7</sup>. Women who take paid parental leave experience better physical and mental health as a result of taking leave. Parental leave also leads to improved prenatal and postnatal care for infants, which has long-term health and social benefits throughout the rest of the child's life. These improved outcomes result in part because when parents have access to paid leave, mothers are more likely to breastfeed their children longer and parents are more likely to immunize their children and take them to well-child visits<sup>8</sup>. Paid family and medical leave is also incredibly valuable for parents who have a child with a disability or other serious health care needs, as it increases the likelihood that parents are actually able to take time off work to care for their children and reduces the hospitalization time of sick children.

### ***Paid Leave Policies Also Benefit Employers***

Not only is paid family and medical leave a good deal for workers, it also associated with significant benefits and minimal burdens for employers. Survey data from businesses in other states that have implemented paid family and medical leave programs indicate that the overwhelming majority of businesses affected by the programs report either a neutral or positive effect from their state paid leave policies<sup>9</sup>. In fact, paid family and medical leave provides many employers with tangible benefits in form of lower turnover costs, higher worker productivity, and improved employee morale<sup>10</sup>. It is partially because of these well-known benefits that more and more local governments around the nation are deciding to provide their workforces with access to paid leave<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> See *Moving Women and Families Forward: A State Roadmap to Economic Justice*

<sup>6</sup> Sarah Jane Glynn, Center for American Progress, *Breadwinning Mothers, Then and Now*, <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Glynn-Breadwinners-report-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> See Human Impact Partners, *Fact Sheet: Parental Leave and the Health of Infants, Children and Mothers*

<sup>8</sup> See American Academy of Pediatrics, *Major Pediatric Associations Call for Congressional Action on Paid Leave*, <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/pages/FAMILYLeaveAct.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> See Eileen Appelbaum and Ruth Milkman, *Leaves that Pay: Employer and Worker Experiences with Paid Family Leave in California*, <https://cepr.net/documents/publications/paid-family-leave-1-2011.pdf>; and Sharon Lerner and Eileen Appelbaum, *Business As Usual: New Jersey Employers' Experiences with Family Leave Insurance*, Center for Economic and Policy Research, <https://cepr.net/documents/nj-fl-2014-06.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> See *Paid Family and Medical Leave: Good for Business*, National Partnership for Women and Families, <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/paid-leave/paid-leave-good-for-business.pdf>

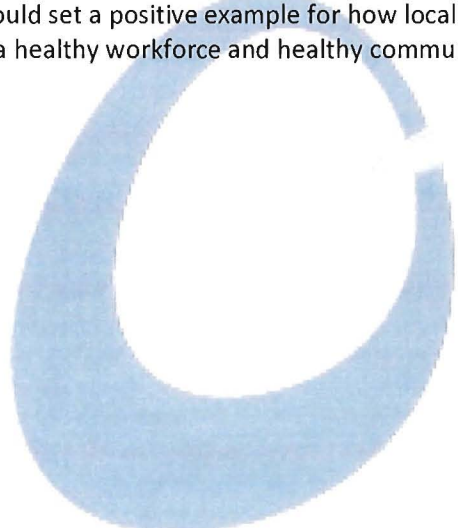
<sup>11</sup> <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-family-leave-policies-for-municipal-employees.pdf>

### ***Other Benefits of Paid Family and Medical Leave***

Given WAWH's mission and areas of expertise, I have largely limited my testimony the benefits of paid family and medical leave for working women and their children. However, the benefits of paid leave extend far beyond the topics discussed in my testimony, as these policies are incredibly important for new dads, workers who need to care for ageing family members, families dealing with substance use disorders, and a whole host of other issues. I have included some addendums to my testimony that discuss just some of these other important issues in more depth.

### ***Conclusion***

As many other proponents of paid family and medical leave will certainly mention as the City continues to deliberate this issue, almost everyone will eventually need a way to realistically balance their work lives with their family obligations or personal health issues. The creation of paid family and medical leave policies for the City's municipal employees would be a tremendous step in the right direction that would help allow municipal employees achieve such a balance. Hopefully, this will be the first of only many steps in the right direction until the United States decides to join the rest of the world, which long ago realized that everyone—workers, employers, and our communities—wins when workers have meaningful access to paid leave. Until that time comes, the City of Madison should set a positive example for how local governments can lead the way in pursuing policies like this that promote a healthy workforce and healthy community.



TO: Mayor Paul Soglin and Members of the City of Madison Common Council  
RE: Support for Implementing Paid Family and Medical Leave Policies for Madison Municipal Employees  
Date: March 20, 2018

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As organizations that recognize the importance of paid family and medical leave to the health and wellbeing of employees, employers, and our communities, we strongly urge you to pass and implement a paid family and medical leave policy for City of Madison employees. Should Madison take the lead and follow through with this initiative, it will serve as an example that we hope other municipalities across the state and private-sector employers will emulate when considering whether to provide their employees with access to paid leave.

The implementation of a robust family and medical leave policy for municipal employees would address one of the most basic realities faced by almost every employee at some time during their working lives – the fact that we all will eventually need to take time off work to care for ourselves or a loved one.

The United States is unfortunately one of only two nations in the entire world that does not provide workers with any form of guaranteed paid leave from work in order to care for themselves if they become seriously ill, care for a seriously ill family member, or care for a new baby,

While the City of Madison has relatively generous existing leave policies compared to many American workers, that is only because of the woeful reality of access to paid leave in the American workforce. That said, many city employees do not have access to sufficient paid leave to take adequate time off to care for themselves, a family member, or a new child when the need arises. As a result, many city employees would greatly benefit from the passage of a more generous paid family and medical leave policy so that they can take time off to take care for themselves or their families without facing a significant loss of income.

The ongoing inaction from Congress and the State Legislature regarding paid family and medical leave policies only further adds to the urgency for forward thinking local governments to step into this unfortunate policy void. Many states and localities across the nation have recognized the importance of expanding access to paid leave and we are encouraged that Madison is considering following in their footsteps.

If Madison elects to implement a robust paid family and medical leave policy for municipal employees, it will help ensure that members of its workforce can realistically balance their work lives with their family obligations. The passage of such a policy would recognize what the vast majority of the rest of the world already knows: workers, employers, and our communities all win when we ensure that workers have access to paid leave. We strongly encourage the City of Madison to set a positive example for how local governments can lead the way in pursuing policies that promote a healthy workforce and a strong economy by implementing this important policy.

**Organization Name**

9to5 WI

African American Breastfeeding Network, Inc.

African American Roundtable

Citizen Action of Wisconsin

DAIS (Domestic Abuse Intervention Services, Inc.)

End Domestic Abuse WI

Fresh Start Learning Inc

Kids Forward

League of Women Voters of Dane County

Madison City Attorneys Association

Mary's Daughter, LLC

NARAL Pro-Choice WI Foundation

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Wisconsin

Rape Crisis Center, Inc.

Schools and Communities United

Voces de la Frontera

Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health

Wisconsin Breast Cancer Coalition

Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault

Wisconsin Democracy Campaign

Wisconsin Early Childhood Association

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice

Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals

Wisconsin Network for Peace, Justice & Sustainability

Wisconsin Women's Network

Worker Justice WI

YWCA Southeast Wisconsin

**For More Information About Why Paid Leave is Important to Everyone, Visit:**

**<http://www.nationalpartnership.org/issues/work-family/paid-leave-fact-sheets.html>**

- **Paid Family & Medical Leave: An Overview**  
Nearly all workers need to take time away from work at some point to deal with a serious personal or family illness or to care for a new child. Laws providing paid family and medical leave allow workers to meet these needs without jeopardizing their economic security.
- **Paid Leave Works in California, New Jersey and Rhode Island**  
Studies of the nation's three paid family leave programs demonstrate how well paid leave policies work for workers, families and businesses.
- **The Child Development Case for a National Paid Family & Medical Leave Insurance Program**  
Enacting public policies that provide parents with paid leave from work to care for their young children is critical to the healthy development of children and families.
- **Treatment for Drug Use and the Need for Paid Family and Medical Leave**  
Treatment programs and the support of family caregivers aid the recovery of people with substance use disorders — but too many people do not have the supportive workplace policies they need to make ends meet while seeking treatment or providing this care.
- **Children Benefit When Parents have Paid Leave**  
Parents need to be able to care for ill or newborn children. But the 21st century reality is that most parents work.
- **Fathers Need Paid Family and Medical Leave**  
Women, and especially mothers, continue to be the primary caregivers in most U.S. families today, but more fathers are providing more care now than in the past. Although some employers recognize this reality and the importance of providing leave for women and men, most still do not.
- **Older Adults and Caregivers Need Paid Leave**  
Paid family and medical leave (“paid leave”) allows older workers to address their own health needs without having to drop out of the labor force.
- **Paid Family and Medical Leave: Good for Business**  
Leading business owners and managers recognize that every worker will at some point need time off to attend to health or family issues.