



Paid family/medical leave becomes the law in 7th state

Joyce M. Rosenberg

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Connecticut has joined the small and slow-growing group of states that give employees paid leave to care for sick relatives or deal with their own medical conditions.

Seven states and Washington, D.C., now have paid family and medical leave laws that provide for employee and/or employer-funded insurance pools to partially replace workers' wages. Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont signed legislation on June 25 that calls for a paid leave system to be in place as of January 2022.

Paid family and medical leave laws are separate from laws in 10 states and many large cities that require employers to allow workers to accrue paid sick time. Besides Connecticut and the nation's capital, family and medical leave laws are on the books in California, New Jersey, Rhode Island, New York, the state of Washington and Massachusetts.

While there are variations among the state and Washington, D.C., laws, they all provide paid time off so employees can care for newborn, adopted or foster children; care for a seriously ill relative or deal with their own disability or health conditions. The Connecticut law also provides for paid leave for organ or bone marrow donors and to deal with events surrounding the military service of a spouse, child or parent.

The laws provide for four to 12 weeks of paid family leave, and eight to 52 weeks for an employee's medical leave. Employees don't receive their full pay; each state has its own formula for determining the amount of benefits employees can receive. In New Jersey, for example, employees can receive 66% of their average weekly wage, up to a maximum of \$650. On July 1, 2020, the rate goes up to 85%.

Legislation to require paid parental leave has been introduced by Democratic and Republican members of Congress in recent years but hasn't made much headway. Lawmakers have disagreed over how to fund the paid leave.

Nearly three-quarters of Americans support the creation of a program that provides 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave, according to a survey released in December by the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank based in Washington, D.C.