

WASHINGTON Examiner

Paid leave laws hurt working women

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December 13, 2018

Democrats introduced their paid parental leave act in Congress five years ago today, and they haven't let go of that legislative dream since.

In the name of feminism, they really should. Paid parental leave mandates harm young working women more than anyone, and a new survey from the Cato Institute proves that the law would be detested in practice.

Although three-quarters of those surveyed said that they supported the FAMILY Act, a mere 29 percent still supported it when given the stipulation that women would be less likely to get promotions or become managers. If the FAMILY Act were signed into law, this certainly would happen. In fact, women attempting just to start their careers would face discrimination in hiring alone.

As the Cato Institute notes, American women thrive in the workplace far more than their counterparts in comparable nations with paid leave. Ample economic evidence shows that this relationship is stronger than mere correlation; paid leave in fact prevents the acceleration of women's career progressions.

Furthermore, if employers know that they have to spend more money for less labor for people who take paid leave than those who don't, employers would be incentivized to discriminate against hiring young women, the demographic most likely to take paid leave.

What sounds like a conservative political talking point is actually a liberal economic one. Obamacare architect Jonathan Gruber argues that young working women ultimately bear "100 percent" of the burden of the economic costs of paid leave laws.

A Harvard Business Review study found that employers view women with resumes indicating that they've taken paid leave before as less favorable, indicating that if a federal paid leave act were actually adopted, a hiring bias would expand against those most likely to take advantage of paid leave.

Successful corporations like Netflix and Airbnb have adopted extremely generous paid leave programs to astounding success. As a private and individual measure, paid leave can be used as a powerful hiring incentive for the country's most booming companies to attract the best talent, including women of child-bearing age. But smaller or less profitable companies can't afford to take the risk of hiring someone who may wind up costing the firm thousands of dollars for zero labor down the road.

If we want more women in the workplace, the last thing we need is a well-intentioned but discrimination-inducing paid leave bill.