



## Trump camp sends mixed messages on paid-leave plan for single mothers

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Donald Trump's new proposal for paid maternity leave is vague about who would be eligible, labor-policy experts say, including a provision that could exclude one of the country's most economically vulnerable groups: single mothers.

A document on the Trump campaign's website states that same-sex couples would receive the six weeks of paid leave under the policy only if their marriage is "recognized under state law," a provision that could effectively bar any unmarried parent.

Trump campaign spokesman Jason Miller told The Washington Post that Trump's maternity-leave policy would extend to single mothers. However, he could not explain why a marriage requirement is cited on the campaign's website or why it was mentioned by Ivanka Trump in an interview with Cosmopolitan magazine.

"We don't have the exact legislation written down," he said.

Ivanka Trump, the Republican presidential nominee's eldest daughter, noted the rule in the interview last week. She said fathers and parents who adopt would not be eligible for the six weeks of paid leave, and when pressed on why the plan leaves out dads, the 34-year-old mother of three replied, "It's meant to benefit, whether it's in same-sex marriages as well, to benefit the mother who has given birth to the child if they have legal married status under the tax code."

The campaign has credited Ivanka Trump with inspiring and co-designing the proposal, the first of its nature from a top GOP contender for the White House.

"The plan is discriminating against fathers, fathers and mothers who adopt, LGBT parents and apparently some set of unmarried parents," said Carmel Martin, executive vice president for policy for the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank.

The Trump campaign has previously addressed the plight of many single mothers. In a Wall Street Journal essay last week, Ivanka Trump acknowledged their uphill battle. "The number of

households led by single mothers has doubled in the past three decades," she wrote, "and the majority of these women work in low-paying jobs without flexibility or benefits."

About 9.9 million single mothers with young children live in the United States, according to federal statistics. Nearly a third of those with jobs live in poverty.

If Trump's plan rejected single mothers, black families would be especially affected. According to federal data, 70 percent of black children are born to unmarried mothers, a threefold increase since the 1960s and a level relatively unchanged since the 1990s.

Some experts said the wording of Trump's policy was too ambiguous to determine who could participate.

Michael Tanner, a domestic-policy analyst at the libertarian Cato Institute, said he thinks the Trump campaign has stayed intentionally vague on the details in order to appeal to a larger voting population.

"I think this is another case where he hasn't really thought out the language they're using," Tanner said. "There's no legal way to exclude a single mother."

Conservative economist Aparna Mathur, who studies tax policy and labor issues at the American Enterprise Institute, said Ivanka Trump's statement didn't clarify the matter.

"I don't see details about who is left out, who is eligible," she said after reading the Trump campaign's public outline of the policy.

The Trump team has said single people and families - gay, straight, adoptive and foster - would qualify for the tax breaks under Trump's broader child-care plan. The GOP candidate proposes allowing parents to deduct the average cost of their state's care from their income taxes. He also wants to extend six weeks of paid leave to new birth mothers, exclusively, through the country's unemployment insurance program, which currently supplies benefits only to people who have been laid off. The average weekly benefit, it says, would be \$300. Trump says he would pay for it by eliminating the system's fraud.