



207 E Buffalo Street, Suite 211  
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 FamilyValuesAtWork

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Testimony in Support of #211166, Paid Parental Leave Ordinance for City  
Milwaukee City Council Finance and Personnel Committee  
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January 12, 2022

Members of the Finance & Personnel Committee:

Thank you for hosting this hearing on the ordinance to ensure parents of a new child can afford time to heal, to bond with a new child — or if necessary, to grieve a loss, without jeopardizing their income or their job.

I am a co-founder and strategic advisor to Family Values @ Work, a national network of state coalitions that has been organizing for, and winning, policies that ensure working people can have paid time to care. We salute this step by the City of Milwaukee and urge you to see the urgency and approve it today.

Clearly, our nation needs a federal policy that encompasses all forms of care — children don't need their parents only when they're born or adopted or fostered, and it's not just kids who need care. We need to ensure that the national policy covers all working people, no matter what kind of job they do, where they live, or who they love.

Paving the way to that victory are the pace-setting paid family and medical leave provisions passed by nine states and the District of Columbia, and the paid parental leave ordinances passed by more than 100 local governments in places as diverse as Fort Wayne, Indiana; Shawnee, Kansas; DeSoto, Texas; and Madison, Wisconsin.

Our nation has the embarrassing distinction of being the only economically advanced country with no paid leave program. For far too long, the assumption has been that workers are men with a wife at home full-time to handle any caregiving needs that arise, and that men themselves don't provide or want to provide care. These assumptions are rooted in a long history of devaluing care rooted in racial and gender injustice.

As a result, nationwide [nearly one in four](#) pregnant workers go back to the job within two weeks of giving birth. Most of those who take paternity leave take [less than 10 days](#). Adoptive parents often lack the time needed for their new child, the vast majority of



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[whom are not infants](#) — most come from foster care or other countries, and need greater amounts of care..

When you consider cost, start right here: the astounding costs of the lack of paid leave for kids, for families, for the community. The harm falls disproportionately on workers of color, immigrant workers, and those who are low-paid. **We simply cannot afford inaction.**

The American Academy of Pediatrics and other experts overwhelmingly agree: 12 weeks is the [MINIMUM time](#) infants need for bonding. "Infancy is a critical period for child health and development," says Dr. Benard Dreyer, former AAP president. "The American Academy of Pediatrics supports legislation providing 12 weeks of paid family leave, but I must stress that this is really a very modest minimum. Research tells us that while at least 12 weeks of paid leave is essential, there are dividends the longer it is." Guaranteeing this minimum standard has a host of [intended consequences](#), including lower infant and maternal mortality and increased engagement by dads.

Typically what gets classified as "parental leave" in the U.S. is saved vacation time. As any parent can tell you, having a baby or a newly adopted child is a great joy, but hardly a vacation. When people have dedicated new child leave, they will be able to take vacations for rest and relaxation and save sick time for when they or a child is ill.

A [significant body of evidence](#) shows the benefits to employers who offer paid leave, including better retention and attraction of new employees and higher morale and productivity. Passing this ordinance is good policy and good politics — and good business practice.