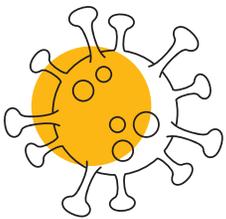




Workers in COLORADO DESERVE PAID LEAVE

The 1,000 Days between a woman's pregnancy and her child's second birthday offer a critical window of opportunity to build better, healthier futures. Research shows that paid leave can improve the health of mothers and babies, promote breastfeeding and enable children to get a strong start to life. However, far too many American workers, especially low-wage working women and women of color, do not have access to paid family and medical leave. A lack of paid leave can cause disruptions in women's connections to the labor force, compromising their access to employer-provided health insurance and other benefits. This can have long-lasting effects on the health of women and their families, as well as financial hardship. Paid leave allows parents, particularly mothers, to avoid having to choose between caring for their families and preserving or gaining economic security. Making paid leave universally available is especially helpful for women of color, women with less education and unmarried women to be able to afford to take the leave they need while working in jobs that may not offer more benefits.



Even before the coronavirus pandemic, it was clear that paid leave is a public health imperative. COVID-19 has drawn attention to and expanded preexisting disparities, creating both a health crisis and an economic crisis that has disproportionately impacted women, low-income families and families of color. The majority of jobs deemed essential in this crisis are held by women, too many of them earn low wages. Many of these workers do not have access to paid leave or affordable, quality health care, and in the age of a viral pandemic, that threatens public health and community well-being.

Paid leave saves lives.

- In 2013, the maternal mortality ratio in Colorado rose to **46.2 deaths per 100,000 live births**.
- In 2017, 291 infants died in Colorado, **a rate of 4.5 deaths per 1,000 live births**.
- The CDC estimates that **700 women die every year** in the U.S. from pregnancy-related complications.
- **Providing 12 weeks of paid leave** in the U.S. could result in **nearly 600 fewer infant deaths per year**.
- A study of leave-taking in the U.S. found at 21 months postpartum infants had a **47 percent reduction in re-hospitalization** when mothers took paid maternity leave.



Paid leave is a public health imperative.

- Many workers must patch together time off by taking **sick leave, vacation, short-term disability, unpaid leave or a combination thereof.**
- Women in the U.S. are **working later into their pregnancies** and **returning to work earlier after childbirth** than previous generations.
- According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2018 a mere **17 percent of workers had paid leave provided by their employers.**
- **Only 5 percent** of the low-wage workers, who earn an average wage of \$10.28 per hour, **have access to paid time off to attend to their medical or family caregiving needs.**
- **The length of leave a woman is able to take matters for her health.** In a nationally-representative sample of U.S. women who returned to work in the first year after childbirth, women with less than eight weeks of paid leave had a lower overall health status than those with longer leaves.



We conducted multiple, in-depth interviews with four low-income women in Colorado throughout their pregnancy and postpartum period. Each of these women, who vary in age, race, marital status, educational attainment and occupation, have one key thing in common: they do not have access to paid family and medical leave. Here's what they had to say.

“I was still on my leave and I decided I had gone through my savings and I kind of depleted everything, and I was thinking, When I go back to work, I'm not going to be able to build this back up with my wages right now.”

“[At] six weeks, she was just so little when I went back... I was just like, I need to stop working. I would have even liked to have stopped working before that because I was just so exhausted at that point. I feel like it wasn't enough. But I just had to because the bills keep coming.”

“My employer is really caring, giving, empathizes, like, he has kids....Although I didn't get paid maternity leave, he did write me a check for a little bit of money. It was just a couple hundred bucks, but that was still enough for us to buy groceries or get diapers.”

“As long as I know that we have, like, a three-hour shift coming up ahead of time, I can feed her before we leave the house and she comes to work with us. She loves the car seat and the car. [One time] we ended up being on a five-hour shift and we couldn't stop [to breastfeed], and she was just crying and crying. Well, it was right around the one-month mark where she starts eating more. And I had to wait until we could stop the car because I can't take her out of the car seat. And so I had to listen to my baby scream for 30 minutes which by the way my baby never screams, never cries. So it was a lot. I didn't end up going to work for a few days after that just so she could have time at home.”

“I went in [to work two weeks after birth] and I started bleeding heavily for some odd reason, and I had to take half of my shipments back to the warehouse because I couldn't deliver them.”

1,000 Days is the leading non-profit advocacy organization working to ensure women and children in the U.S. and around the world have a healthy first 1,000 days.



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