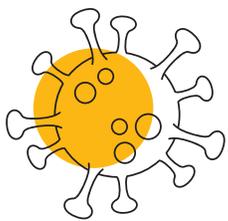




# Workers in GEORGIA DESERVE PAID LEAVE

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 parental leave disrupts women's connections to the labor force and their employer, often leading to financial hardships and career disruptions. Paid leave allows parents, particularly mothers, to avoid having to choose between caring for their families and preserving or gaining financial stability. 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.



**The COVID-19 pandemic** has underscored the need for paid leave and the disparities in who has access to it. Many essential workers are also low-wage workers, which means they have less access to affordable, quality health care. Many of these workers are unable to take paid time off from their job, and in the age of a viral pandemic, that threatens public health and community well-being.

## Paid leave saves lives.

- From 2011-2015, Georgia had the highest maternal mortality rate in the country with **46.2 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births**.<sup>1</sup>
- **In 2017, Georgia's infant mortality rate was 7.2 per 1,000 live births**, meaning 932 infants died before their first birthday. Infant mortality among Black, non-Hispanic infants is two times higher than White, non-Hispanic or Hispanic infants.<sup>2</sup>
- 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 Georgia 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.



One of the study participants from Georgia with her baby.

“Sometimes it can be overwhelming because she has about two appointments each week. She was born with cleft lip and cleft palate. She also had open heart surgery. So with the cleft lip and cleft palate she also sees the surgeon. And then she also

sees [a feeding specialist], so they're not always on the same day because you're going for feeding. And then she goes in just to see the surgeon. And then she goes to see her regular pediatrician. And then she has to go to a cardiologist for her heart. And then she also goes to physical therapy to make sure that she's developing correctly. And then she was going to a speech therapist that works with her swallowing and things like that. So, we see about six different people.”

“With a newborn, it's way more demanding than I thought it was going to be, so I just decided not to go back [to work]... because it was completely work from home, so unless I put her in daycare or something I wasn't going to be able to work from home and have her at home. The cost of daycare would have been pretty much what I was making, so it didn't make sense to try to continue to work there.”

“When I was 18 weeks pregnant I notified all the managers, and then the next day my main manager, he told me to leave my phone in my car, and he wanted to take me for a ride to go see a client. But when we were in the car he told me that since I'm pregnant I should really just quit. I'm just going to get fat and I'm not going to be able to make any sales...and nobody's going to respect me in this industry....He said if I contact HR he would terminate me immediately....I was just scared of him. I would just sit in my car and cry every day. I was fired at 29 weeks.”

Sources: <sup>1</sup> “States With the Highest Maternal Mortality Rates,” *U.S. News & World Report*, 12 June 2019    <sup>2</sup> *2017 Infant Mortality Report*, Georgia Department of Public Health

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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