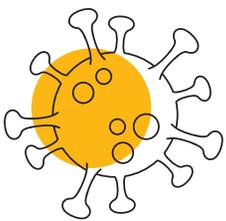




Workers in KANSAS DESERVE PAID LEAVE

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.

- In 2017, Kansas had a maternal mortality rate of **21.9 deaths per 100,000 live births**, above the national average.
- **Kansas' infant mortality rate is 6.1 deaths per 1,000 live births**, which is higher than the national average. In Kansas in 2017, 221 infants died before their first birthday.
- 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 Kansas 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.



Brittany's Story

My husband, Dan, and I weren't actually trying to have a baby at the time I got pregnant, so we were not prepared financially. We didn't have any savings, and my husband's income working flag hours as a technician is pretty spotty.

Working as a banker, my income was the money we could count on, but my job wasn't as understanding about my pregnancy as I hoped. They did not offer paid leave, and I used up all my sick time and vacation time staying in bed and going to doctors' appointments. Some days I felt so sick I couldn't get up, and other days I was in so much pain I couldn't walk.

Living paycheck to paycheck, not knowing if my husband's check will be enough to cover the bills, has become very stressful. It shouldn't have to be like this for parents.



Brittany and Damon Harvey
of Olesa, Kansas

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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