

December 10, 2019

House Committee on Oversight and Reform  
2157 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Committee hearing on “Examining the Need for Comprehensive National Paid Family and Medical Leave”

Chairwoman Maloney, Ranking Member Jordan, Members of the Committee,

We, the undersigned maternal and child health organizations, would like to thank the House Committee on Oversight and Reform for holding this hearing on the need for comprehensive national paid family and medical leave. This issue is of critical importance to working families. We strongly urge Congress to support a comprehensive paid family and medical leave policy to support optimal child development, improve maternal health, reduce disparities and enable future generations to live healthier lives.

Unlike in most other countries, in the U.S. parents are often unable to take time off from work to care for a new child, critically ill loved-one, or tend to their own medical needs without sacrificing the income they need to support their families. This has profound and lasting impacts on maternal and child health in the United States. Because pregnancy, childbirth and the transition to motherhood can be physically and psychologically demanding, women need time to care for themselves and their health. Paid leave is a critical tool to support healthier pregnancies, better birth outcomes, more successful breastfeeding and both physical and mental health in the postpartum period. Additionally, inclusive and comprehensive policies can reduce the inequities in access to paid leave, helping to bridge the racial and ethnic disparities in overall maternal and child health outcomes.

Beyond allowing for physical recovery after childbirth, paid time off from work is essential to providing a strong foundation for mom, baby and their family to thrive. Science tells us that babies’ brains are nourished by time spent with parents and caregivers. Policies that enable parents to spend time nurturing and caring for their babies—particularly in the early weeks after birth and for babies that are born pre-term, low birth weight or with illness—are critical to the healthy cognitive, social and emotional development of children.

It is time for Congress to act, and to provide all families with the comprehensive paid family and medical leave policy they need. We are grateful to Chairwoman Maloney and the Committee on Oversight and Reform for holding this important hearing and we look forward to working with you to advance a comprehensive, national paid leave policy to meet the needs of American families.

Sincerely,

1,000 Days

Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses

First Focus on Children  
March for Moms  
March of Dimes  
Mom Congress  
National Association of Neonatal Nurses  
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health  
National Birth Equality Collaborative  
National Perinatal Association  
National WIC Association  
National Women's Health Network  
Nurse-Family Partnership  
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine  
ZERO TO THREE  
2020 Mom