

Family Friendly Workplace Policies Must Include **Grandparents**

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Grandparents are the glue that holds many families together – yet our workplace laws don't honor their critical role.

Grandparents help build strong families. They provide emotional and financial support, and millions act as primary caregivers for their grandchildren – an increasingly important role during tough economic times. In addition, millions of aging or ill grandparents are cared for by adult children or grandchildren who must juggle family caregiving and paying work. That's why, now more than ever, grandparents – and their families – need workplace policies that help them meet their work and family responsibilities without jeopardizing their economic security or job stability.

Grandparents are both family caregivers and care recipients in millions of U.S. families.

- ▶ Grandparents play a key role in the care of our nation's children. Nearly four in 10 grandparents – 2.7 million people – are responsible for the care of their grandchildren.¹ And of the seven million grandparents living with their grandchildren, more than half are in the labor force.²
- ▶ The number of children being raised primarily by their grandparents is rising. Between 2007 and 2010, the number of children being raised by a grandparent increased by 10.6 percent to nearly 2.9 million children.³ The number of grandparents who are responsible for their grandchildren increased by nine percent.⁴
- ▶ Grandparents also need and receive care from family members. Nearly one in 12 unpaid family caregivers in the United States – more than five million people – care for a grandparent or grandparent-in-law.⁵

Public workplace policies fail to recognize the critical role that grandparents and grandchildren play in caregiving.

Neither grandparents who care for grandchildren nor grandchildren who provide care to elderly or ailing grandparents have the right to job-protected leave under our federal laws. That means workers can be fired for taking time away from work to care for a seriously ill grandparent or grandchild.⁶

It's time for Congress to take action to honor our nation's grandparents by advancing workplace policies that will strengthen their economic security. Fortunately, some forward-thinking lawmakers have already introduced or are working on legislation that would help tremendously by:

- ▶ **Expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).** The Family and Medical Leave Inclusion Act, would expand the definition of family member under the FMLA to allow workers to take time off to care for a domestic partner, parent-in-law, adult child, sibling, grandchild or grandparent. The Family and Medical Leave Enhancement Act, would amend the FMLA to cover businesses with 25 or more employees and expand the reasons a worker is allowed to take FMLA leave to include parental and family involvement and routine family medical needs.
- ▶ **Creating a paid leave insurance fund.** Proposed national paid family and medical leave insurance legislation (the “FAMILY Act”) is modeled on successful family leave insurance programs in California and New Jersey. This self-sustaining insurance fund, paid for through small contributions from workers and employers, would be used to replace a portion of wages for eligible workers when they need to take time off for any of the reasons covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act.
- ▶ **Ensuring workers can earn paid sick days.** The Healthy Families Act, H.R. 1286/S. 631, would allow workers in businesses with 15 or more employees to earn up to seven job-protected days each year to be used to recover from their own illness, access preventive care or provide care for a family member, including a grandparent or grandchild.
- ▶ **Strengthening family friendly workplace laws at the state level.** States across the country are working to promote family economic security through paid family leave, paid sick days and FMLA expansion. Many of these efforts include grandparents and grandchildren.

1 U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *American Community Survey, United States: B10051 Grandparents living with own grandchildren under 18 years by responsibility for own grandchildren by presence of parent of grandchildren and age of grandparent*. Retrieved 7 September 2012, from http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_10_1YR_B10051&prodType=table

2 U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *American Community Survey, United States: B10058. Employment status of grandparents living with own grandchildren under 18 years by responsibility for own grandchildren and age of grandparent*. Retrieved 7 September 2012, from http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_10_1YR_B10058&prodType=table

3 U.S. Census Bureau. (2007). *American Community Survey, Grandchildren under 18 years living with grandparent householder by grandparent responsibility and presence of parent (Table B10002)*. Retrieved 7 September 2012, from http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_07_1YR_B10002&prodType=table;

U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *American Community Survey, Grandchildren under 18 years living with grandparent householder by grandparent responsibility and presence of parent (Table B10002)*. Retrieved 7 September 2012, from http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_10_1YR_B10002&prodType=table

4 U.S. Census Bureau. (2007). *American Community Survey, B10051 Grandparents living with own grandchildren under 18 years by responsibility for own grandchildren by presence of parent of grandchildren and age of grandparent (Table B10051)*. Retrieved 7 September 2012, from http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_07_1YR_B10051&prodType=table;

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5 National Alliance for Caregiving. (2009, November). *Caregiving in the U.S. 2009*. National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP publication. Retrieved 7 September 2012, from http://www.caregiving.org/data/Caregiving_in_the_US_2009_full_report.pdf

6 In 2010, the Department of Labor released an interpretation that amended the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to protect grandparents and other individuals who serve “in loco parentis,” but this was only a first step.

The National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, access to quality health care and policies that help women and men meet the dual demands of work and family. More information is available at www.NationalPartnership.org.

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