

# Working Families Need Paid Family and Medical Leave

## The FMLA protects our jobs, but is unpaid.

- ◆ Since the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was passed in 1993, FMLA leave has been used **more than 100 million times by working people who need to take job-protected time off** to recover from their own serious illness; to care for a seriously ill family member or to bond with a newborn or newly adopted child.
- ◆ Yet, FMLA is not enough. **Millions of workers cannot take FMLA because they cannot afford to take the unpaid leave the law provides.** Among workers who need family and medical leave but do not take it, 78 percent said they cannot afford to miss a paycheck. For those who do take leave without pay, the financial repercussions can be drastic, forcing many to declare bankruptcy and apply for public assistance.

## Paid leave makes it possible for workers to take time off to care for their own health or their families.

- ◆ **Millions of workers serve as their family's caregivers.** Half of workers care for an elderly relative or young child. Three in four mothers of children under 18 years work for pay. Two in three people under 60 expect to be responsible for the care of an elderly relative in the next 10 years.
- ◆ Allowing working parents to care for and bond with newborns and newly-adopted children lays the foundation for healthy child development. And when family members care for people at home, sick children recover faster; and hospital stays and paid in-home care needs are reduced.

## Working people have few options for paid leave.

- ◆ **Only 8 percent of workers have access to paid family and medical leave.** California, New Jersey and Washington are the only states to offer paid leave programs.
- ◆ Low wage workers have even fewer options for paid leave. **Two in five low-income workers have no leave of any kind, including no paid family leave, no paid sick days or no paid vacation days.**

## Support for Paid Leave is Strong—and Momentum is Building

- ◆ **More than three in four voters support expanding FMLA to provide paid family and medical leave,** according to a June 2007 national survey. Support is strong across geographic, demographic and party lines.
- ◆ **Three states have already established paid leave programs, California, New Jersey and Washington, and campaigns are moving ahead in several other states, including New York, Illinois and Pennsylvania.**
- ◆ At the federal level, the **Family Leave Insurance Act** would provide eight to 12 weeks of partially paid leave for FMLA purposes, paid for by employer and worker contributions.