



September 25, 2019

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**RE: Vote Yes on Motion to Instruct National Defense Authorization Act  
(NDAA) Conferees to Include the Federal Employee Paid Leave Act  
(FEPLA) in the NDAA Conference Agreement**

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, I write to **urge you to vote Yes on the Motion to Instruct National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) Conferees to Include the House-Passed Federal Employee Paid Leave Act (FEPLA) in the NDAA Conference Agreement.**

The federal government is the nation's largest employer, but currently provides no paid family and medical leave to its more than 2 million employees, threatening the economic security of our nation's public servants. Nearly everyone will need to take time away from work at some point to care for a family member or new child, or to take care of their own personal illness. Lack of paid leave, however, means that federal workers are forced to choose between a paycheck and providing for the health and well-being of themselves and their families.

FEPLA would provide 12 weeks of paid leave for the birth, adoption or foster placement of a new child; to care for a spouse, child, or parent; for particular military caregiving and leave purposes; and for personal health reasons to federal workers who are eligible for job protected, unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). FEPLA would not provide employees with additional leave time but would ensure that federal employees can receive full pay during their 12 weeks of FMLA leave.

Access to paid leave helps provide economic security and peace of mind to individuals who face, sometimes unexpected, caregiving responsibilities; helps individuals remain in the workforce; and prevents turnover. Women who take paid leave are more likely to be working within a year after giving birth than those who have no leave,<sup>i</sup> and family-friendly policies have been shown to reduce turnover intention by 37.5 percent in federal agencies.<sup>ii</sup> Paid leave benefits families and individuals, which in turn benefits the federal government by decreasing costs associated with turnover, estimated to be between 50 and 200 percent of a working person's annual salary,<sup>iii</sup> and promoting stability and efficiency in operations.

Paid leave is also key to supporting the health and well-being of employees and their families. New mothers who take paid leave are more likely to take the amount of



time away from work recommended by doctors. When parents have the financial ability to take time off from work when their children are seriously ill, families do better. For example, the presence of a parent can shorten a child's hospital stay by 31 percent.<sup>iv</sup> Paid leave also allows individuals the freedom to support family members with serious health conditions, helping them fulfill treatment plans and manage their care.

Proposals calling for consideration of voluntary compensatory time programs and tax incentives, instead of paid leave, are not relevant to the federal workforce. Federal employees already have access to comp time, but they do not have access to guaranteed paid leave, which would provide true flexibility for individuals who have caregiving responsibilities and give employees and our federal government more stability and predictability at work. Comp time is not a replacement for paid leave, can have unintended consequences for hourly workers, and can impede the ability of employees to plan their family time.

For these reasons, The Leadership Conference urges that you vote YES on the Motion offered by Senator Brian Schatz to Instruct the NDAA Conferees to Include the House-passed Federal Employee Paid Leave Act in the NDAA Conference Agreement. If you have any questions, please contact Gaylynn Burroughs, Senior Policy Counsel, at [burroughs@civilrights.org](mailto:burroughs@civilrights.org).

Sincerely,

Vanita Gupta  
President & CEO

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<sup>i</sup> Linda Houser and Thomas P. Vartanian, Center for Women and Work, Rutgers , The State University of New Jersey, *Pay Matters: The Positive Impacts of Paid Family Leave for Families, Businesses, and the Public* (Jan. 2012), [https://smlr.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/images/CWW\\_Paid\\_Leave\\_Brief\\_Jan\\_2012\\_0.pdf](https://smlr.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/images/CWW_Paid_Leave_Brief_Jan_2012_0.pdf).

<sup>ii</sup> Jungin Kim and Mary Ellen Wiggins, Family-Friendly Human Resources Policy: Is It Still Working in the Public Sector?, *Public Administration Review* (Sept. 1, 2011).

<sup>iii</sup> Bill Conerly, Companies Need to Know the Dollar Cost of Employee Turnover, *Forbes* (Aug. 12, 2018), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/billconerly/2018/08/12/companies-need-to-know-the-dollar-cost-of-employee-turnover/#14e07917d590>.

<sup>iv</sup> S. Jody Heymann, Sara Toomey, and Frank Furstenberg, Working Parents: What Factors are Involved in Their Ability to Take Time Off from Work When Their Children Are Sick?, *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* (Aug. 1999), available at <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/347581>.