

Paid Family & Medical Leave for Oklahoma Workers

BACKGROUND

At some point, almost all workers will experience the need for time away from work to care for themselves, a loved one with a serious illness, or a new child. Unfortunately, many Oklahomans do not currently have access to paid family and medical leave and simply cannot afford to take unpaid time away from work. For workers already struggling to make ends meet each month, the sizable income loss from taking a week or more off is simply not financially feasible. That means many low-wage workers often are not taking time off, even when they need it.



Paid leave is an important piece of family and economic health. It allows workers to take the time they need to care for themselves or a relative during illness or to allow new parents to bond with their child during a critical early development stage. Paid leave allows them to do all these things without risking their family's financial security. Unfortunately, paid family and medical leave is not available to most working Oklahomans. In a state that values family as much as Oklahoma does, that's a real problem.

Nine states have already adopted statewide insurance programs to make paid family and medical leave available to all workers and the self-employed. These programs work very similarly to unemployment insurance and are funded by a very small payroll tax that is usually less than 1 percent. Oklahoma could easily adopt this type of insurance system and make paid leave a reality for working Oklahomans.

THE SOLUTION

- Adopt a statewide insurance program to make paid family and medical leave available to all workers and the self-employed

Become An Advocate

Making change happen will require Oklahomans from all walks of life to advocate with lawmakers and speak out in their communities. OK Policy has resources available on our website or connect with Together Oklahoma (TOK), our statewide grassroots advocacy coalition.



For links to additional information visit us online at
www.okpolicy.org

2020 Legislative FOCUS AREAS



PROTECT MEDICAID

- Keep path clear for Oklahoma voters to determine SQ 802 for straightforward Medicaid expansion
- Avoid legislation for other Medicaid expansion options that would reduce access to health care and tie up the state in lawsuits



TARGETED CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

- Rebuild financial structure for the state's criminal justice system to remove its reliance on fines and fees to fund its operations
- Modernize Oklahoma's sentencing based on national best practices



TAX CUT FOR WORKING OKLAHOMANS

- Restore refundability for the Earned Income Tax Credit, which most benefits Oklahoma's working poor while reducing the effects of poverty



PAID FAMILY & MEDICAL LEAVE FOR WORKERS

- Adopt statewide insurance programs to make paid family and medical leave available to all workers and self-employed through a payroll tax of less than 1 percent



COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENTS FOR RETIRED STATE EMPLOYEES

- Provide a 4 percent cost of living adjustment for state retirees who have not seen an increase in their pensions since 2008



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