

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 7, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States  
The White House

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Republican Leader  
United States Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Republican Leader  
United States House of Representatives

Dear President Biden, Majority Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy,

As Americans continue to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are writing to urge you to reinstate and expand guaranteed emergency paid sick and family caregiving leave in the FY 2022 funding bill or in any separate COVID relief package Congress considers. Access to guaranteed paid sick and family caregiving leave is a critical public health intervention that will provide needed economic benefits for both workers and businesses as the pandemic continues. It will help American workers keep their jobs and allow more people to return to the workforce.

In order for the nation to continue recovering from the pandemic, we need people who are sick to be able to stay home to curb the spread of the virus. Furthermore, caregivers need the ability to stay home to care for a loved one. Americans need to be confident they can do these things and still keep their jobs so they can provide for their families. This is even more critical for women and people of color, who both have been disproportionately impacted by caregiving responsibilities and have borne the brunt of labor force disruptions. About two-thirds of parents with young children who left the labor force in 2020 were mothers<sup>1</sup>, and Black and Hispanic women have suffered some of the largest increases in unemployment and drops in labor force participation during the pandemic, with child care issues playing a significant role<sup>2</sup>.

Congress must pass a guaranteed emergency paid sick and family leave program immediately for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. Any new law should ensure that guaranteed leave is accompanied by tax credits for businesses with fewer than 500 workers to reimburse them for the costs of providing the paid leave; should apply to workers in business of all sizes; and must provide, at a minimum, 10 days of paid sick and family caregiving leave, including leave to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://19thnews.org/2021/01/about-700000-parents-with-young-kids-left-the-workforce-in-2020-for-many-loss-of-child-care-was-to-blame/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/03/05/black-and-hispanic-women-arent-sharing-in-the-job-market-recovery.html>

receive - or take a loved one to receive - a vaccination, and to address school or child care closures.

The United States is one of the only high wealth nations that does not have a national paid family, medical or sick leave policy. Prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, 34 million workers did not have access to paid sick time<sup>3</sup>, and nearly 8 in 10 workers currently lack access to comprehensive paid family leave<sup>4</sup>. To provide support to workers and businesses during the early days of the pandemic, Congress, in the bipartisan Families First Coronavirus Relief Act (FFCRA), enacted guaranteed paid sick and caregiving leave, but it expired at the end of 2020 and only applied to business with fewer than 500 workers. Because of the FFCRA, it is estimated that at least 22 million workers nationwide had the ability to stay home when they were sick without losing a paycheck or their job<sup>5</sup>, and it helped prevent more than 400 cases of COVID-19 per day per state, totaling about 15,000 cases of COVID-19 per day<sup>6</sup>. As the pandemic continues, we must build on what the FFCRA provided and expand that coverage to more American workers.

Between late December 2021 and early January 2022, with the latest surge of COVID-19 illness caused by the Omicron variant, about 8.8 million Americans were unable to work due to their own illness or the need to care for someone who was sick. An additional 5.3 million stayed home to care for a child who was unable to attend school or daycare<sup>7</sup>, with closures and COVID exposures forcing parents to take on additional caregiving responsibilities. Unfortunately, millions of workers no longer have access to paid sick or caregiving leave through the FFCRA, and large companies that began offering 10 days of paid sick leave during the pandemic are no longer offering it. Congress should build on the success of the FFCRA's guaranteed emergency paid family caregiving and sick leave to help ensure that workers can isolate, quarantine, be treated, and get vaccinated for COVID-19; care for a loved one who is ill with COVID-19; and care for and supervise children who cannot attend in-person school or child care.

Congress must reenact and expand the FFCRA's guaranteed emergency paid sick and caregiving leave to help workers and rebuild our economy, as we work toward the creation of a permanent paid family and medical leave program for all workers in the long term. We urge you to make this a priority.

Sincerely,

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/03/12/as-coronavirus-spreads-which-u-s-workers-have-paid-sick-leave-and-which-dont/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2021/employee-benefits-in-the-united-states-march-2021.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/coronavirus-paid-leave-exemptions-exclude-millions-workers-coverage/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00863>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2021/demo/hhp/hhp41.html> Household Pulse Survey, Employment Table 3



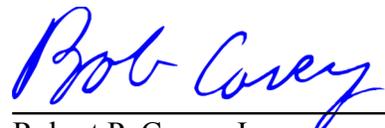
Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



Tina Smith  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
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Sheldon Whitehouse  
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Tammy Duckworth  
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Cory Booker  
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator