



Statement of HPAE Public Policy Staff Jean Pierce – April 27, 2017

The health benefits, job security and flexibility for families of Paid Family Leave are enormously important to New Jerseyans.

Our union, HPAE, has been taking a debt survey of our members focusing on medical debt. Many of our members are caring for their parents as well as their grandchildren. When you are ill and given the choice, wouldn't you want a healthcare professional caring for you?

Our survey shows a significant number of HPAE members need time off to care for their family members. Nurses will sometimes switch their shifts (to work 12 hour night shifts) to accommodate the need to care for their loved ones at home. This places a tremendous strain on the caregiver, who then has to deal with exhaustion.

Paternal Leave – Paid parental leave can have a significantly positive effect on the health of children and their moms; and increases the likelihood that fathers who have taken paid leave will remain involved in the child's care.

Women who have access to paid leave are more likely to take advantage of a longer period of time with their babies. In addition, women who take leave show improvements in their overall mental health. These moms are less likely to suffer depressive symptoms, anxiety, and maternal dissatisfaction.

Women benefit economically with paid leave. They return to their employer where their wages will continue to grow and employers save money on employee turnover replacement.

There are also positive benefits of extended paternal care as allowed through paid leave:

- A reduction in infant mortality rates,
- The increased likelihood that infants will receive well-care and immunizations, and
- Greater ability for Moms to breastfeed their babies for a longer period of time. Breastfeeding, lessens the likelihood of various infections, can lower the risk of asthma and childhood obesity.

Without paid family leave, parents and family members must make the difficult choice of staying at home to care for their family member and losing pay and possibly losing their jobs.

In these uncertain economic times, as more of us struggle to keep our jobs and our homes, Paid Family Leave Insurance and much-needed paid sick days mean more to New Jersey's families than ever before.