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Time for Progress: The More Paid Leave for More Americans Act

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It's been over 30 years since the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act, and progress on paid leave remains stuck. Just half of all workers have an unpaid leave benefit, and paid leave is a privilege that mostly goes to college-educated workers in office jobs. ¹ It's time to make progress.

A pragmatic approach to paid leave has been the foundation behind the Bipartisan House Paid Family Leave Working Group, led by Co-Chairs Representative Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA) and Representative Stephanie Bice (R-OK). Alongside their working group members, Reps. Bice and Houlahan have been working hard to get more paid leave to more Americans—most recently with the introduction of the [More Paid Leave for More Americans Act](#). ² The package includes two pieces of legislation—the Interstate Paid Leave Action Network Act (I-PLAN Act) and the Paid Family Leave Public Partnerships Act. ³ In this explainer, we briefly describe these two components and the benefits they can provide for working families.

What is the I-PLAN Act?

As states advance their own paid leave programs, each comes with its own set of rules and regulations. This often makes it hard for organizations with employees working across different states to track eligibility and deliver benefits.⁴

The I-PLAN Act creates the Interstate Paid Leave Action Network: a multi-state initiative where participating states work together to create a national framework for state paid family and medical leave (PFML) programs.⁵ Members join voluntarily, meet to share data, present best practices, and develop an “I-PLAN Agreement.”⁶ The agreement would establish common definitions and administrative standards for PFML programs to help shape future collaboration.⁷

By facilitating a process for states to align their standards and practices, the I-PLAN Act simplifies benefit delivery and compliance for both employers and workers.⁸ This can help multistate businesses provide paid leave to their employees as well as help states learn from one another to improve existing programs going forward.

What is the Paid Family Leave Public Partnerships Act?

Establishing a PFML program requires robust funding, both for starting up the program and sustaining it.⁹ In fact, high costs are often cited by states as a barrier to implementing their own paid leave programs, leaving many workers without access to this critical benefit.¹⁰

The Paid Family Leave Public Partnerships Act provides competitive grants to incentivize states to establish PFML programs that utilize public-private partnerships.¹¹ For example, a state government could collaborate with a private-sector insurance company to provide and administer PFML benefits—like we see in different types of programs in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Colorado.¹² States that follow this public-private partnership model are eligible for funding as long as they also offer at least six weeks of paid leave for birth or adoption, provide a 50–67% wage replacement rate, and cap benefits at 150% of the state’s average weekly wage.¹³ Preference will be given to states with low existing PFML uptake, program plans that support low-income individuals, and those that seek to finance their programs long-term beyond federal funding.¹⁴ This creates a multi-faceted initiative that both encourages new program development across states without policies and provides avenues to funding for states seeking to expand their existing operations.¹⁵

Bottom Line

The I-PLAN Act and the Paid Family Leave Public Partnerships Act are true commonsense pieces of bipartisan legislation: they do not impose mandates on states or employers, they are relatively low-cost, and their implementation would not require a substantial increase in federal oversight or

operations. ¹⁶ American employers, who express strong agreement with these acts' goals, should also favor the legislation. ¹⁷

Of course, these bills won't solve all issues related to paid leave, but they are the first signs of much-needed progress. Thousands of parents, caretakers, and those that need time to care for themselves could benefit from progress on PFML.

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ENDNOTES

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