



Governor Murphy Signs Speaker Coughlin's Historic Family Leave Expansion Legislation

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Provides Job Security to More Than 400,000 Additional Workers

Lowers Eligibility Threshold from Employers with 30 or More Employees to Employers with 15 or More Employees

Establishes Minimum of Three Months of Employment – Instead of 12 Months of Employment – to be Eligible for Leave

TRENTON – Today, Governor Phil Murphy signed into law A3451/S2950, revising New Jersey Family Leave Act (NJFLA) eligibility requirements to extend job-protected leave to more than 400,000 additional employees.

The New Jersey Family Leave Act (NJFLA) provides 12 weeks of job-protected leave every 24 months to eligible employees who need to take time off to care for a family member with a serious health condition or to bond with a new child or a child recently placed for adoption or foster care. In addition to expanding job-protected leave, these new protections will also empower workers to utilize their Family Leave Insurance (FLI) cash benefits, with the knowledge and comfort that they can return to their jobs. When the leave concludes, the employee is entitled to be restored to their position or a position of equivalent seniority, pay, and benefits and employers cannot retaliate against employees for taking or attempting to take leave.

Currently, for an employee to be eligible for NJFLA job-protected leave, the employee must work for an employer with 30 or more employees, have been employed for at least 12 months, and have worked 1,000 hours in the last 12 months. Today's legislation amends the eligibility requirements to include employees that work for an employer with 15 or more employees, have been employed for at least three months, and have worked 250 hours in the preceding three months.

The legislation also provides additional job protections to those employees who utilize Temporary Disability Insurance benefits (TDI) for their own medical needs, requiring that employees be restored to their position or a position of equivalent seniority, pay, and benefits upon their return.

"I am proud to sign this legislation into law and expand job protection to hundreds of thousands of additional New Jersey workers," **said Governor Murphy**. "By amending the eligibility requirements for job-protected leave, we are ensuring newer employees and employees of small businesses are not excluded from the protections of the New Jersey Family Leave Act. Now, employees will not have to work as long before being able to utilize their leave with the assurance that they can return to their job once the leave concludes."

"Study after study shows that expanding family leave is good for the workforce, good for babies and families, and good for our state as a whole," **said Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin**. "By reducing the amount of time someone has to be on the job before becoming eligible for family leave, this legislation recognizes the realities of today's workforce and makes sure more parents can care for and bond with their newborn without fearing they'll lose their job. No one should be penalized for needing time to care, and this bill helps make sure the vast majority of workers never will."

"Expanding access to protected family leave is a commonsense measure to better support New Jersey's working parents," **said First Lady Tammy Murphy**. "With today's bill signing, we are guaranteeing that New Jersey's working mothers and fathers are not forced to choose between their jobs and their commitments at home. Emboldening workers to leave to care for a newborn or address health concerns is an important step forward in support of our mission to make New Jersey the best state in the nation to deliver and raise a baby."

The Murphy Administration has established a legacy of fighting for and protecting workers across the state. Governor Murphy notably signed sweeping legislation ([https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/f1zern/7ys5259b/bu74xdb_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbAlLIP_X2lrGUZDKR90oz8AoAaK8_mJ-ZNubfBv5HT_HwEElI8Am0F_rXPvJh1DPTHpA8iGdoBHtke_pk5TRbGGzRc\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/f1zern/7ys5259b/bu74xdb_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbAlLIP_X2lrGUZDKR90oz8AoAaK8_mJ-ZNubfBv5HT_HwEElI8Am0F_rXPvJh1DPTHpA8iGdoBHtke_pk5TRbGGzRc$))

in 2019 to expand family leave insurance benefits. The Governor has also worked with countless labor unions over the past eight years to address and resolve industry-specific concerns. Additionally, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) has annually raised the maximum benefit rates and taxable wage base for its Unemployment Insurance (UI), Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI), Family Leave Insurance (FLI), and Workers' Compensation programs.

"Governor Murphy's signing of Bill A3451 into law provides vital support for New Jersey's working families, allowing workers to care for their loved ones without the fear of job loss," **said Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo**. "Under this administration, we expanded and increased Temporary Disability and Family Leave Insurance benefits, but we recognized that job protection remained a barrier for many. This law ensures that every New Jersey worker who uses their paid leave benefits now has job security when they need it most."

The prime sponsors of A3451/S2950 are Senators Andrew Zwicker and Paul Moriarty, Speaker of the Assembly Craig Coughlin, and Assemblywomen Annette Quijano and Verlina Reynolds-Jackson.

"This legislation is about fairness and dignity for working families across New Jersey. For too long, hundreds of thousands of workers paid into Family Leave Insurance without knowing if their job would still be there when they return from their own leave," **said Senator Andrew Zwicker**. "In closing the gap by extending protections to employees working at smaller businesses, no one will have to choose between caring for a new child or an aging parent and keeping their livelihood."

"Despite the fact that the Family Leave Act and Family Leave Insurance are meant to work in tandem to protect New Jersey workers who have to take family leave, current law has a major gap in coverage that may discourage workers from taking the leave they are entitled to," **said Senator Paul Moriarty**. "Employees at smaller businesses are much more vulnerable to losing their jobs after taking leave due to the law's current provisions, disproportionately impacting women, caregivers, and other workers in lower-income brackets. This pivotal bill signing will afford family leave protections to many more New Jersey workers, whether they work for a huge corporation or a small business."

The number of people helped by this bill reaches far beyond just the individual workers," **said Assemblywoman Annette Quijano**. "For every employee that benefits from A3451, even more New Jerseyans – parents, children, siblings – will benefit as well."

"Workers in multi-generational families face tough choices on a regular basis, but deciding to take time off to care for a sick relative or a newborn child should not come with the added pressure of worrying if they will have a job to return to," **said Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson**. "This meaningful piece of legislation is designed to remove that barrier for anyone who works somewhere that has five or more employees and wants to spend time focused on their families."

"This is a commonsense reform. Workers shouldn't lose their job if they use the paid family leave program to care for a newborn baby or to take care of a severely ill family member, especially since workers' pay 100% of the cost of the program," **said New Jersey State AFL-CIO President Charles Wokanec**. "For too long, many workers have been afraid to access the paid family leave program because their boss can permanently replace them if they do. What good is such a program if a worker loses their job if they use it? Furthermore, an estimated additional 370,000 workers will be able to access the program due to this law. We thank Governor Murphy and the legislature for passing this law that takes a solid step forward by providing job protection for additional workers."

"Hundreds of thousands of New Jersey workers will be able to take leave without fear of job loss when they need to care for a new child or a loved one, thanks to the bill signed by Governor Murphy and passed by the Legislature. Workers fully fund NJ Family Leave Insurance and expanded job protections ensure equitable access to paid leave for improved health and economic outcomes of workers and their families," **said New Jersey Citizen Action's Workplace Justice Program Director, Yarrow Willman-Cole**. "New Jersey Citizen Action and the New Jersey Time to Care Coalition are grateful for Governor Murphy's leadership on family leave, from improving paid family leave 7 years ago, to signing the bill to expand job protected leave today."

"We applaud Governor Murphy and the Legislature for once again expanding worker benefits, making our state an even better place to raise and care for our families," **said Amber Reed, Co-Executive Director of AAPI NJ**. "Asian American communities will benefit tremendously from this law, with many caring for immediate and extended family members in multigenerational households. We greatly appreciate the Department of Labor's engagement with partners including AAPI NJ to ensure more employees are aware of and can access paid family leave. Advancing worker benefits and protections does not just support individual workers and families, but strengthens our state's economy and communities."

"No New Jersey worker should have to fear for their job if they take time to care for family or bond with their child," **said Peter Chen, Senior Policy Analyst at New Jersey Policy Perspective**. "This much-needed change will make the promise of paid family leave real for hundreds of thousands more workers across the state. NJPP looks forward to the coming day when all workers have these protections."

"At a time when so many are losing access to medical coverage, Governor Murphy has moved New Jersey workers in the opposite direction by signing into law expanded job protected access to paid family leave benefits. When health emergencies occur, no one should have to choose between a paycheck and caring for a family member in need. Paid family leave programs strengthen our families and should be equitable and accessible to all workers," **said Debbie White, RN, HPAE President**.

"All people deserve dignity in their work," **said NJEA President Steve Beatty**. "Our members already have these protections through their union-bargained contracts. But on this weekend in particular, we are reminded that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere, so we were proud to work in solidarity with New Jersey Citizen Action and other advocates to help extend these basic rights to all working people in New Jersey."

"Bonding with a new child, supporting children or youth with disabilities and special healthcare needs or senior family member that requires caregiving is the nexus for NJ Paid Family Leave. Unfortunately too many barriers for workers remained. This expansion will lower the employee limit to 15 and reduce the hours/days worked making this very important benefit much more accessible. We applaud Governor Murphy's signing of this bill and helping to move the state further along in access, equity, and improved outcomes for the families of New Jersey," **said Peg Kinsell, Policy Director for SPAN Parent Advocacy Network**.

"The more than one million family caregivers in New Jersey are too often forced to make the impossible choice between keeping their job and caring for a loved one," **said AARP NJ State Director Chris Widelo**. "With the stroke of a pen, Governor Murphy is taking an important step to ensure working caregivers can take family leave without fear of losing their jobs. We applaud Governor Murphy and thank Senator Andrew Zwicker, Senate Majority Leader Paul Sarlo, Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson, Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, and Assemblywoman Annette Quijano for their leadership in standing with family caregivers and strengthening protections for working families across New Jersey."

"This is a game changer not just for individual workers, but for families and our communities across New Jersey. By expanding protections and lowering barriers to paid leave, this law ensures that more workers, not just those at large corporations, have the right to put their families first. CWA is proud to stand with our partners and our members whose advocacy made this victory possible. We thank the legislature and the Governor for taking action, because when workers are supported, our entire state is stronger," **said Anna-Marta Visky, NJ Political & Field Director for CWA D1**.

"This bill is yet another shining example of what New Jersey's working families have come to expect from Governor Phil Murphy. His eight years in office have been spent lifting up the middle class of this state higher than we've ever been. It is fitting and noteworthy that he continues his advocacy for the working class to the very end of his distinguished public service career. SMART-TD and the Labor community wants Gov. Murphy to know that though his efforts, leadership, and friendship are not surprising after 2 terms of consistency, they are never taken for granted, and always appreciated! We thank you for your vision in achieving this legislative milestone, and for the countless improvements you have made in the quality of life for New Jersey's workers throughout your career," **said Ron Sabol, State Legislative Director, SMART-TD**.

Governor Phil Murphy

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