

State of New Jersey

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Sweeping Legislation Expanding Paid Family Leave

02/19/2019

PISCATAWAY – Acting on his commitment to support and uplift New Jersey's middle class, Governor Phil Murphy today signed into law a sweeping expansion to the state's paid family leave program. New Jersey enacted a paid family leave program in 2008 and today's law significantly expands that program to provide additional job protections for those who miss work due to caring for a newborn child or a sick loved one.

"No one should ever be forced to choose between caring for a family member and earning a paycheck," **said Governor Murphy**. "By providing the most expansive paid family leave time and benefits in the nation, we are ensuring that New Jerseyans no longer have to face such a decision and that working families are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve. This comprehensive paid family leave program, coupled with the newly passed earned sick leave and minimum wage increase, are fundamental elements in building a stronger and fairer New Jersey for all working families."

A3975 changes New Jersey's paid family leave program in a number of ways, including the following:

- **Doubling the number of weeks for Family Leave Insurance (FLI):** Employees can take up to 12 consecutive weeks of paid family leave during any 12-month period, beginning in July 2020. Currently, employees are only able to take up to 6 weeks of FLI in a 12-month period.
- **Increasing the weekly benefit:** Individuals can now receive 85 percent of their weekly wage, with the maximum possible benefit going up to 70 percent of the statewide average weekly wage. Using data from this year, the maximum possible benefit would go up from \$650 a week to \$860 a week under this law.
- **Increasing intermittent leave from 42 days to 56 days:** Workers will be able to take up to 56 days of intermittent leave within a 12-month period, beginning in July 2020.
- **Anti-retaliation provisions:** Employers with over 30 employees will be barred from retaliating or discriminating against an employee because they took family leave.
- **Expanding individuals eligible to take paid family leave:** The newly signed legislation expands paid family leave to include caring for siblings, in-laws, grandparents, grandchildren, other blood relatives, and any other individuals who can be shown to have the equivalent of a family relationship.
- **Including domestic and sexual violence:** The bill explicitly allows family temporary disability leave to be taken for medical attention, counseling, or legal assistance or proceedings arising out of domestic violence or sexual violence. An individual can take family leave under this provision if they themselves were the victim of domestic or sexual violence, or if they need to care for a family member who was such a victim.

"Expanding family leave means people can take needed time off to care for each other without the worry of losing their paycheck, or even worse, their job," **said Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver**, who also serves as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs. "Taking care of family members is a fact of life that we will all have to face at some point and by signing this bill today, we are making it possible for working people to take care of each other without risking their livelihood."

"We applaud the persistence of Governor Murphy, the Legislature and advocates who came together to expand

Family Leave Insurance," **said Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo**. "Now, New Jersey workers can better afford to take time to bond with a newborn child or care for a family member in need. Our staff are ready to help workers access these benefits to make their families and communities healthier and stronger."

Primary sponsors of the bill include Senate President Steve Sweeney; Senators Patrick J. Diegnan and M. Teresa Ruiz; and Assemblymembers Annette Quijano, Thomas P. Giblin, Joann Downey, and Paul D. Moriarty.

"This will put New Jersey in the forefront of the nation with a paid leave program that serves the needs of families and is good for businesses. Paid leave can ease financial burdens and provide peace of mind for working families at critical times in their lives. Caring for a newborn child or a loved one with a serious illness can be a real challenge for those who can't afford to lose their paychecks for an extended amount of time." **Senate President Sweeney, who authored the law creating the leave program in 2009.**

"Too many people must choose between their family responsibilities and their paychecks," **said Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin**. "The expansion of paid family leave will provide families and individuals across our state with a better quality of life and the time and resources necessary to care for others. As we move to make New Jersey more affordable and resources more accessible, paid family leave will play an instrumental role in improving the lives of workers and building a future for themselves and for their kids."

"Many workers can't afford to take family leave because of its low wage replacement rates, or choose not to out of fear of being retaliated against if they do. In some cases, they are unaware that this is even an option," **said Assemblywoman Quijano**. "The law will now help working families who need to take time off work to bond and care for a new child, or to care for a family member who is sick or is recovering from a violent ordeal to do so without jeopardizing their financial security."

"Taking care of a newborn or serving as a caretaker for a loved one is very stressful, and one thing that New Jersey workers should not have to worry about during such a time is whether they will have the income necessary to support themselves and their families," **said First Lady Tammy Murphy**. "By ensuring that working family members under difficult circumstances will not have to choose between their jobs and their commitments as mothers, fathers, or other supportive family members, expanding paid family leave and temporary disability insurance will have a direct impact on New Jersey's maternal and infant mortality crisis."

"Paid family leave is an economic and moral imperative that New Jersey's working families need to survive and thrive. The changes adopted today make our program more open and accessible to many previously left behind. With these changes, New Jersey has become a national leader on paid family leave, and a model for the nation," **said Dena Mottola Jaborska**, Associate Director at New Jersey Citizen Action and co-covener of the New Jersey Time to Care Coalition.

Governor Murphy signed the bill at JFK Library in Piscataway.

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Office of Governor PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000

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