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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TRENTON – A two-year study commissioned by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) to measure awareness of – and perceived access to – the state’s paid leave laws found 71 percent of workers report having access to paid time off to care for themselves, while half were able to identify Earned Sick Leave and Family Leave Insurance by name.

[The study](#), conducted by the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development and other partners in conjunction with NJDOL, sought to understand opinions and use of the programs. About half of respondents reported having access to paid leave to care for loved ones.

While workers must meet eligibility requirements to qualify for Family Leave Insurance benefits, all employers regardless of size must provide paid sick leave to nearly all workers, full-time, part-time, and temporary. Employers are also required to inform employees of their paid leave benefits and protections.

Both the Earned Sick Leave Law and Family Leave benefits cover time off to care for oneself, as well as loved ones. A related [sick leave study](#) by Heldrich revealed some employers discourage workers from taking their sick time or shared incorrect information.

The recent polling data showed those with lower earnings and workers of color are more concerned about job security and advancement if they utilize one of the paid leave options, despite retaliation protections in the laws. The NJ Family Leave Act, the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, and the NJ SAFE Act also provide [job protection](#) to some workers who take leave.

“This research underscores the progress we’ve made to raise awareness and use of New Jersey’s paid leave programs, which are among the most generous in the country, and helps us map the important work still ahead. We’re committed to helping all New Jersey workers access their benefits, and to further reduce barriers to paid leave among communities that we know face particular challenges,” said Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo.

NJDOL data shows Family Leave applications/payouts increasing by more than 50 percent since 2017, particularly among fathers and nonbirth parents taking leave. Since 2016, the percentage of family leave claims for males taking leave to bond with a new child has doubled from 14 percent to 28 percent.

NJDOL launched outreach and education efforts during the Murphy Administration to help ensure all residents know their benefits and rights at work and to help navigate any roadblocks to accessing these benefits.

Its biggest initiative to date is the Cultivating Access, Rights, and Equity (CARE) grant, which has awarded \$2.6 million to 45 organizations that leverage community-based and culturally rooted outreach and education methods. So far, grant recipients have reached nearly 27,000 workers, trained 345 staff and participated in 320-plus outreach events in every corner of the state. Their work has resulted in tens of thousands of dollars in benefits for claimants to care for themselves and loved ones.

NJDOL also hosts virtual and in-person presentations, organizes tables at public events such as the First Lady’s Nurture NJ Family Festivals, and conducts direct outreach to medical providers, employers and strategic partners. Though employers were not surveyed in the most recent research, NJDOL has [identified industries](#) in which compliance with Earned Sick Leave has been low, and is conducting education and awareness campaigns in those business sectors.

For the most recent research, the Heldrich Center partnered with the Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations’ Center for Women and Work and the Eagleton Institute of Politics Center for Public Interest Polling to conduct four statewide surveys of working New Jerseyans in 2020, 2021 and 2022. The research coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Learn more about Family Leave and Temporary Disability Insurance: myleavebenefits.nj.gov.

Learn more about Earned Sick Leave: mysickdays.nj.gov.

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