



June 10, 2026

Pennsylvania Senate Labor and Industry Committee

RE: In Support of the Family Care Act (SB906)

Chair Robinson, Chair Kane, and distinguished members of the Senate Labor and Industry Committee:

On behalf of Children's HealthWatch, a network of pediatricians, public health researchers, and policy experts, we write to encourage you to vote in favor of *The Family Care Act* (SB906), which would create a critical statewide paid family and medical leave program in Pennsylvania.

Paid family leave improves the physical, mental, and financial health of parents and children in both the short- and long-term. It also benefits the economy by strengthening the workforce, improving employee retention and morale, and lowering costs for employers and individuals. **We urge the Senate Labor and Industry Committee to support working Pennsylvanian families and vote in favor of passing this bill.**

Children's HealthWatch seeks to achieve health equity for young children and their families by advancing research to transform policy. We accomplish this mission by interviewing caregivers of young children accessing care in emergency departments and primary care clinics in four cities: Boston, MA; Minneapolis, MN; Little Rock, AR; and Philadelphia, PA and sharing our findings with policymakers, researchers, and the public, in order to drive evidence-based policy change. We analyze data from those interviews to determine the impact of public policies on the health and development of young children and their families' well-being. Since 2005, we have interviewed over 13,000 parents seeking care for their children at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children in Philadelphia.

Currently, 4.3 million Pennsylvanians - about two-thirds of the total workforce in the Commonwealth - do not have access to paid family leave.¹ Fourteen states, plus Washington, D.C., have passed state-level paid family leave programs.² Research shows that these programs are a cost-effective tool to maintain job retention,

¹ Investments in Caring PA. *Paid Leave*. <https://www.investmentsincaringpa.com/paid-leave>

² Wielk, E. *State Paid Family Leave Laws Across the U.S.* Bipartisan Policy Center. <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/explainer/state-paid-family-leave-laws-across-the-u-s/> Published April 2026.

productivity, and employee morale while also improving health outcomes for workers and their families.^{3,4}

The Family Care Act would allow workers to take up to 20 weeks of leave from their jobs and still receive a portion of their salary. This leave could be used to bond with a new baby or adopted child, care for an elderly parent or disabled spouse, or care for their own health after a serious illness or injury. The Family Care Act is funded by workers via a small tax on their paychecks. The money generated from this tax is deposited into a fund that Pennsylvanian workers can draw from to fund their leave. This structure does not increase costs for businesses, while helping workers maintain financial stability during their time off, and 81% of working Pennsylvanians in the state support its passage.⁵

Paid family leave, including maternity leave, is associated with decreased infant mortality rates and a lower risk of rehospitalization after birth for both mothers and infants.^{6,7} For every week of maternity leave taken from eight weeks and beyond, the likelihood of reporting poor mental health, including depressive symptoms, for mothers decreases by 2%.⁸ Less stress means mothers are better able to bond with their babies and are less likely to report intimate partner violence or cases of child abuse.⁹

Additionally, longer maternity leaves increase rates and duration of breastfeeding,¹⁰ which is linked to improved infant immune and digestive system health and reduced risk of chronic disease later in life, including obesity and breast cancer.¹¹ Infants born into families who had access to maternity leave have better birth outcomes, including higher

³ National Partnership for Women and Families. *Paid Family and Medical Leave Is Good for Business*. <https://nationalpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/paid-leave-good-for-business.pdf> Published May 2025.

⁴ Democratic Staff of the Joint Economic Committee. *The Economic Benefits of Paid Leave: Fact Sheet*. United States Congress Joint Economic Committee. <https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/cache/files/646d2340-dcd4-4614-ada9-be5b1c3f445c/jec-fact-sheet---economic-benefits-of-paid-leave.pdf>

⁵ Children First. *Pennsylvania Voters Show Strong Support for Paid Family Leave in PA*. <https://childrenfirstpa.org/report/pa-voters-show-strong-support-for-paid-family-leave-in-pa/>

⁶ Van Niel MS, Bhatia R, Riano NS, De Faria L, Catapano-Friedman L, Ravven S, Weissman B, Nzodom C, Alexander A, Budde K, Mangurian C. *The impact of paid maternity leave on the mental and physical health of mothers and children: a review of the literature and policy implications*. Harvard review of psychiatry. 2020 Mar;28(2):113-26.

⁷ Jou J, Kozhimannil KB, Abraham JM, Blewett LA, McGovern PM. *Paid Maternity Leave in the United States: Associations with Maternal and Infant Health*. Matern Child Health J. 2018 Feb;22(2):216-225.

⁸ Chatterji P, Markowitz S. *Family leave after childbirth and the mental health of new mothers*. J Ment Health Policy Econ. 2012 Jun;15(2):61-76.

⁹ Aitken Z, Garrett CC, Hewitt B, Keogh L, Hocking JS, Kavanagh AM. *The maternal health outcomes of paid maternity leave: a systematic review*. Soc Sci Med. 2015 Apr;130:32-41.

¹⁰ Navarro-Rosenblatt D, Garmendia ML. *Maternity Leave and Its Impact on Breastfeeding: A Review of the Literature*. Breastfeed Med. 2018 Nov;13(9):589-597.

¹¹ Binns C, Lee M, Low WY. *The Long-Term Public Health Benefits of Breastfeeding*. Asia Pacific Journal of Public Health. 2016;28(1):7-14.



birth weights and lower rates of hospitalization.¹² Benefits of a healthy start extend beyond infancy; extensive research demonstrates that the first 1,000 days of a child's life are the most crucial for their development and can impact their overall health and well-being as adults.

Financial stability is crucial for keeping families healthy in the short- and long-term. Children's HealthWatch research consistently shows that when families cannot afford basic needs, children suffer lasting health consequences, and that financial hardships increase children's risk for negative cognitive, academic, and health outcomes that persist throughout their lives.^{13,14,15} Simply put, when families are able to afford their basic needs, both parents and children are more likely to be in optimal health.¹⁶ Paid family leave allows families to maintain income and care for their loved ones.

With enactment of the Family Care Act, Pennsylvania can become a national leader on family policy and affirm our commitment to the health and well-being of families across the Commonwealth, including children, older adults, and people with disabilities. Access to a paid leave program would mean workers are not forced to choose between foregone wages and caring for their own health and their families, resulting in better health and financial stability and increased worker retention for businesses. We urge the Senate Labor and Industry Committee to vote favorably on The Family Care Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Félice Lê-Scherban".

Félice Lê-Scherban, PhD, MPH
Co-Lead Principal Investigator, Children's HealthWatch
Philadelphia, PA

¹² National Partnership for Women and Families. *Paid Leave is Essential for Healthy Moms and Babies*. <https://nationalpartnership.org/report/paid-leave-is-essential-for/> Published May 2021.

¹³ Cutts DB, Ettinger de Cuba S, Bovell-Ammon A, Wellington C, Coleman SM, Frank DA, Black MM, Ochoa E, Chilton M, Lê-Scherban F, Heeren T, Rateau LJ, Sandel M. *Eviction and Household Health and Hardships in Families With Very Young Children*. *Pediatrics*. 2022 Oct 1;150(4):e2022056692.

¹⁴ Parker MG, de Cuba SE, Rateau LJ, Shea M, Sandel MT, Frank DA, Cutts DB, Heeren T, Lê-Scherban F, Black MM, Ochoa ER Jr, Rose-Jacobs R, Garg A. *Associations of household unmet basic needs and health outcomes among very low birth weight children*. *J Perinatol*. 2023 Mar;43(3):364-370.

¹⁵ Drennen CR, Coleman SM, Ettinger de Cuba S, Frank DA, Chilton M, Cook JT, Cutts DB, Heeren T, Casey PH, Black MM. *Food Insecurity, Health, and Development in Children Under Age Four Years*. *Pediatrics*. 2019 Oct;144(4):e20190824.

¹⁶ Sheward R, Ettinger de Cuba S, Cutts DB, et al. *Hardship-Free Households Are Associated With Optimal Caregiver and Child Health*. *AJPM Focus*. 2025;5(1):100422. Published 2025 Aug. doi:10.1016/j.focus.2025.100422