



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

## State Senate Co-Leader Jeff Klein and Independent Democratic Conference Unveil New Budget Push for Paid Family Leave in New York

JEFFREY D. KLEIN February 11, 2014

| ISSUE: **FAMILIES, LABOR, CHILDREN, YOUTH**

**ALBANY**— Flanked by advocates for working parents, same sex couples and New York seniors, State Senate Co-Leader Jeff Klein and members of the Independent Democratic Conference unveiled a new paid family leave plan today that would vastly expand worker eligibility and increase benefits for working men and women statewide. Under the IDC’s plan, known as Family Leave Insurance, workers would be guaranteed six weeks of paid leave whenever a new child enters their home or close family member is stricken with a serious illness.

During those six weeks, the IDC’s paid family leave plan would provide biological mothers and fathers, same sex parents, adoptive parents, and foster parents, with 50% of their average weekly wage by 2018. The same benefit would apply to workers who are stricken by tragedy and need time away from home to care for a severely ill family member. Currently, New York State limits benefits to biological mothers and caps weekly payments at a paltry \$170.

“There are certain moments in life when no one should be forced to choose between a paycheck and their family,” said **State Senate Co-Leader Jeff Klein**. “But right now, our state is forcing thousands of working families to make that impossible choice every single day. Every parent deserves an opportunity to bond with their new child. Every worker deserves the right to care for a sick spouse, child, or parent, without the threat of falling into a financial tailspin. That’s why states like California—and almost every other industrialized country in the world—have developed paid family leave plans similar to the one we are advocating for today. Family leave insurance makes sense for our workers, our businesses, and our state’s economy—that’s why I am so eager to get this passed as part of our state’s budget.”

The IDC’s Family Leave Insurance plan would be partially subsidized by the New York State General Fund, at an annual cost of \$125 million. Employees would pick-up the remaining balance by contributing between five to fifteen cents per week. Most important, the IDC’s plan would not pass any of the cost on to employers.

The IDC’s study, released today as part of the announcement, found that an overwhelming majority of employers in California—where family leave insurance is already in place—reported the program as generating either a positive or neutral impact on their business. As the report showed, family leave insurance can lead to lower turnover costs and improved productivity among employees

	Max Leave Weeks	Max Weekly Benefit	Max Benefit Per Applicant	Likely # eligible applicants	Total Cost	NYS Subsidy	Remaining Cost
2015	6	\$449.10	\$2,695	46,210.03	\$125 mm	\$125 mm	\$ -
2016	6	\$529.68	\$3,178	46,661.50	\$148 mm	\$125 mm	\$24 mm
2017	6	\$683.29	\$4,100	47,117.38	\$193 mm	\$125 mm	\$68 mm
2018	6	\$705.16	\$4,231	47,577.72	\$201 mm	\$125 mm	\$76 mm

“Every year, women are playing an increasingly critical role in our workforce. Let’s face it: the days of Leave It To Beaver are over,” said **State Senator Diane Savino (D-Statens Island/Brooklyn)**. “Today, women are often expected to perform dual roles as the primary caretaker and the breadwinner. Those who take essentially unpaid leave under the current system are slapped with a motherhood penalty. That cannot continue. Under our plan, we will change the dynamic for working mothers—and families—across this state.”

The only federal protections afforded working parents today are unpaid benefits, which apply only to employees covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The FMLA only applies to companies of 50 or more employees, and, as the IDC’s report found, excludes 40% of the U.S. workforce. The IDC’s paid family leave plan would apply to companies half that size or larger. Similar plans are already in place in nearly every industrialized country, as well as states such as California, Rhode Island, and New Jersey.

**State Senator David Valesky** said, “As a father of three boys, I know how important it is to spend uninterrupted time with a new child. But today, too many parents are denied that very basic right. But it does not end there. Everyday, too many New Yorkers are forced to choose between caring for a sick and elderly loved one and earning a paycheck. That needs to change and under our plan, it will.”

“It’s unacceptable that when it comes to paid family leave, New York looks more like Liberia or Sierra Leone than the progressive leader it’s always been. Federal protections—and our state’s out-dated system—are not getting the job done for New York workers or employers,” said **State Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland)**. “Right now, too many workers are falling through cracks. That cannot continue for our state’s working families and that’s exactly why we’re unveiling this plan.”

“Paid family leave in New York will help caregivers, who struggle to balance work and children with their caregiving responsibilities – all while trying to keep their kitchen table economies in check,” said **Beth Finkel, State Director for AARP in New York State**. “The IDC’s plan would help keep our state’s caregiving crisis from becoming a disaster as a looming demographic shift leaves fewer caregivers to care for more frail elderly parents and spouses. Paid leave would enable caregivers to help loved ones age with independence and dignity in their homes and communities - rather than in expensive, taxpayer-funded nursing homes. AARP thanks Senator Klein for his leadership and the IDC for pushing this win-win issue. We stand ready to work with them to make it a reality.”

“No family should have to sacrifice a job or their financial stability to care for a newborn child or severely ill loved one. It’s time for New York to follow in the footsteps of California, New Jersey and Rhode Island, and enact paid family leave in New York State. We thank Senator Klein and the Independent Democratic Conference for making paid family leave--and the needs of working families--their priority this budget season.” – **Susan Antos, Senior Staff Attorney, Empire Justice Center**

“Every New Yorker deserves compassionate support when they’re experiencing an important life change like caring for a new child or for a family member's serious illness. That's why we support the Independent Democratic Conference's (IDC) proposal to institute Family Leave Insurance," said **Empire State Pride Agenda Executive Director Nathan M. Schaefer**. "As New York's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) advocacy organization, this common sense proposal is inclusive of same-sex-households, and would provide much-needed assistance to all families during times of heightened responsibility."

“New York State Citizens’ Coalition for Children supports this act because most of our adoptive and foster families do not have the benefit of paid maternity/paternity benefits when they want to stay home to care and bond with their children who have just joined their family. Adoptive and foster families should be able

to focus on their children and not worry about how their family finances will be affected by unpaid time off from their employment.” – **New York State Citizens’ Coalition for Children**

“Paid family leave is an important element in workforce development. The knowledge that one can step away from a job for a period of time to take care of family or to bond with an infant or adopted child without fear of risking financial distress is really significant. WDI believes that paid family leave results in stability of employment in the long run. Employees should not have to rely on the goodwill of their employer to receive this benefit. “ – **Workforce Development Institute Executive Director Ed Murphy**

"The American Sustainable Business Council and our businesses across New York are proud to support family medical leave insurance. The business case is clear-businesses save money by retaining their employees and their employees in turn become more productive and effective. The economic effect would benefit employees, businesses and the economy of New York," says **David Levine, CEO of the American Sustainable Business Council.**

“Over 2 million children are benefitting from the full-time support of grandparents and other relatives who have agreed to step in and parent. In the majority of situations there is little to no time to plan and prepare for the transfer of the children to their homes. In addition, these families often receive little to no government supports. It seems only right that for the sacrifice they make to ensure children are safe and not entered into the child welfare system they should receive family leave.” **National Kinship Alliance for Children Executive Director Cathleen Newbanks**

“Every day family caregivers across New York state struggle with issues like providing personal care for loved ones. Every day they worry about aging parents. Every day they hope to avoid the crisis that will tip the delicate balance of independence versus dependence for aging family members. We applaud Senator Klein for introducing legislation to help family caregivers by making it possible for them to care for their loved one AND keep their job.” - **Ann Marie Cook, Director of the NYS Caregiving & Respite Coalition**

“On behalf of the 300,000 older New Yorkers served by the membership of the Council of Senior Centers and Services (CSCS), we support the Independent Democratic Conference, under the leadership of Senator Jeffrey Klein, for recognizing that New York State must support the 4.1 million family caregivers who struggle every day to make sure their elderly parents and other loved ones remain at home. Family caregivers overwhelmingly report financial hardship and difficulties balancing work with their caregiving responsibilities. The Family Leave Insurance program is a critical step forward in reducing some of the financial and employment concerns of New York’s families. It will also help business retain their employees and enhance productivity. Assisting working New Yorkers caregiving for their elderly family members is the workforce issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> century given the rapid increase of older New Yorkers.” -

**Bobbie Sackman, Director of Public Policy, Council of Senior Centers and Services**

"No New Yorker should have to chose between caring for their family members and earning a living. That's why paid family medical leave is so important, especially for the more than 4 million NYS family caregivers who save New York \$32 billion annually in costs for long term care. It's time that New York provide a benefit to helps these families when they need to care for a seriously ill family member. New York's seniors thank Sen. Klein and the Independent Democratic Conference for providing the leadership to establish an insurance benefit that will make a real difference. - **Maria Alvarez, Executive Director, NY StateWide Senior Action Council.**

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