



**INDIANA
COMMUNITY ACTION
POVERTY INSTITUTE**
Research and Public Policy

Testimony before the Interim Committee on Public Health

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Chairman Charbonneau and members of the committee, I am so grateful to have the opportunity to contribute to this conversation today.

This is not an abstract discussion for me. In her early 20's, my mother received an early promotion as secretary at the prison where she worked, hiked to the bottom of the Grand Canyon and back, finished college while she was pregnant with me, and, shortly after I was born and after a battle with postpartum depression, ended her life.

I have had a lifetime to think about what might have made a difference, and I will never have that answer. But one thing I do know is that we cannot talk about postpartum mental health without talking about paid family leave. Today, I'd like to offer four things I know about paid family leave for your consideration.

1. As you'll see on the handout I've provided, the United States is an incredible outlier in not making paid family leave available to new parents. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics data, only 27% of private sector workers have paid family through their employer. In a recent survey of new moms in Fort Wayne, 1 in 5 reported returning to work less than four weeks postpartum.
2. We know a lot about paid parental leave and its benefits because so much research has been done on these policies. Here are just few of the evidence-based benefits:
 - a. Reductions in:
 - i. postpartum depression
 - ii. maternal and infant rehospitalizations
 - iii. preterm birth
 - iv. adverse childhood experiences or ACES
 - v. infant mortality
 - b. Increases in:
 - i. attendance at well-child visits
 - ii. birth weight
 - iii. breastfeeding rates
 - iv. father involvement – short and long-term
 - v. marital satisfaction
 - vi. early detection of development needs

- vii. employee recruitment, retention, and morale
 - viii. workforce participation rates, especially among women
- 3. Indiana could affordably and sustainably establish a paid leave program that would save money on other costs, like Medicaid.
 - a. In your handout, I've included an Indiana-specific cost estimate for a parental leave program from PN-3 Policy Center at Vanderbilt University showing that one budget-neutral way you could fund a paid family leave program is through payroll contributions that average between \$1.92- \$2.56/week for someone earning the average weekly wage - \$0.96-\$1.29/week if the employer shares the cost, as in many state programs. You may be able to subsidize the program using federal TANF dollars.
 - b. We also estimate that a family leave program could save the state over \$140 million annually by preventing low birthweight births, infant hospitalizations, postpartum depression, and, on the other end of the spectrum, nursing home placements.
- 4. Hoosiers are looking to you to solve challenges like this one. Every poll I've seen about paid family leave – including the most recent Ball State Hoosier survey – shows strong bipartisan support for expanding access to paid leave.

I applaud Governor Braun for expanding paid parental leave for state employees, I applaud Senator Rogers for taking the lead on paid parental leave for teachers, and I applaud Senators Pol and Walker for offering paid leave legislation last session. We all value our families – especially our mothers – and we all want children in Indiana to have the best possible start in life. I urge you to give this the attention it deserves as we seek to improve postpartum outcomes and move toward a healthier Indiana.