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Research and Public Policy

Testimony before the Senate Education Committee

SB 199

January 7, 2026

Chairman Raatz and members of the committee, I'd like to offer comments on the paid leave study provisions in SB 199.

The United States is an incredible outlier in not making paid family leave available to new parents. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics data, an estimated 21% of private sector workers in Indiana have paid family through their employer and in a recent survey of new moms in Fort Wayne, 1 in 5 reported returning to work less than four weeks postpartum. States have been stepping up to fill this gap, with 13 states enacting comprehensive paid family and medical leave programs that function similar to unemployment insurance – while other states like Alabama, Tennessee, North Carolina, Utah, Georgia, South Carolina have made paid parental leave available for school staff and Tennessee now allows state employees to use paid leave for end-of-life care as well.

We know a lot about paid parental leave and its benefits because so much research has been done on these policies. Parental leave results in 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

These make it a vital tool for recruiting and retaining our education workforce and supporting healthy child and family development. Indiana can and should affordably and sustainably establish a paid leave program for ALL Hoosier workers that would save money on other costs, like Medicaid. If you are interested, I have available cost modeling for Indiana-specific parental leave program from PN-3 Policy Center at Vanderbilt University.

However, expanding paid leave to our school staff would be a meaningful and measurable step forward for our state. I urge you to take decisive action on this issue, with an eye toward supporting all new parents in the future.