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**COMMUNITY ACTION**  
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Research and Public Policy

Testimony before the House Education Committee

SB 199

February 9, 2026

Chairman Behning and members of the committee, though it's only one piece of the bill, I couldn't miss the opportunity to offer testimony on the paid parental leave study provisions in SB 199.

So much of the conversation here today has been focused on policy choices that can set families – and especially children – up for success. Starting at the beginning with paid parental leave seems like an obvious choice. 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

This last benefit also makes paid parental leave an excellent tool for recruiting and retaining our education workforce, which may be why SB 199 proposes a study of paid parental leave for K-12 staff.

However, I'd love for you to think beyond that. 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; one of the first stories I heard when I started at the Institute was a mom who was back on the bus to the factory less than two weeks after giving birth. Some states have been stepping up to fill this gap, with 13 states paid family and medical leave insurance that function similar to unemployment insurance available to every worker – and if you are interested, I have available cost modeling for Indiana-specific parental leave program from PN-3 Policy Center at Vanderbilt University. Other states including Alabama, Tennessee, North Carolina, Utah, Georgia, South Carolina have already 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.

Making paid parental leave available to the staff who care for all our children makes good sense. But as people who care about the well-being of children in our state and about building strong families and a more resilient workforce, I urge you to think more broadly, with an eye toward supporting all new parents and babies in Indiana. For our part, we stand ready to support you in that effort.