

## Expanded State Leave Policies Help Families Thrive, Say Advocates

(StatePoint) When a child is born or serious illness strikes, workers need time off, but for millions of Americans, it's not that simple.

The United States is one of the only developed countries in the world that does not guarantee paid family and medical leave (PFML), and currently, just 13 states and Washington, D.C. do, covering just a quarter of private-sector workers and a third of people who work for state and local governments. While advocates say that it's time for that to change, they are celebrating recent progress made in certain states.

In particular, Tennessee recently expanded on its previous six-week paid family leave policy to include workers caring for family members at the end of their lives, becoming the first southern state to expand its paid family leave policy beyond parental leave. In Mississippi, a new law grants state government employees up to six weeks of paid parental leave and in Alabama, recently passed legislation provides up to eight weeks of paid leave for state employees and K-12 educators.

"Paid leave is good for families, workplaces and communities," says Robyn Hyden, executive director of Alabama Arise. "Not only is this expanded leave policy helping ensure more Alabama parents can be healthy and provide the care and stability infants, toddlers and their families need to thrive, it provides the added benefit of enabling the state to better recruit and retain teachers and state employees."

While these advances are noteworthy, they are limited, and there is still much work to be done, say experts at A Better Balance, a national nonprofit legal advocacy organization dedicated to promoting justice in the



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workplace.

"Paid family and medical leave supports lasting financial security for everyone, including those in low-wage and hourly jobs, and addresses the needs of communities that have long been under-served and under-protected," says Jared Make, vice president of A Better Balance. "Our goal is to ensure that all workers can care for themselves and the people they love without worrying about how to pay the bills."

To learn more about PFML policies and progress, visit <https://ncit.org/>.

"The expansion of leave policies being made by state governments is encouraging. We will continue our efforts until every worker, regardless of where they live or who they work for, has access to paid family and medical leave," says Lori Fresina of the National Collaborative for Infants & Toddlers.