

January 23, 2023

The Honorable Kari Dziejczak
Minnesota State Senate Majority Leader
3113 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Melissa Hortman
Speaker of the Minnesota House of Representatives
463 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Letter in Support of Paid Family & Medical Leave in HF2 / SF2

Dear Senate Majority Leader Kari Dziejczak, House Speaker Melissa Hortman, and members of the Minnesota State Legislature,

We all want to live a dignified life with the people we love most. As local elected officials serving in towns, cities, and counties across the great state of Minnesota, we urge you to support the Paid Family and Medical Leave insurance program as created in HF2 / SF2.

Local Progress is a movement of more than 1,300 local elected officials across 47 states and DC advancing a racial and economic justice agenda through all levels of local government. As the leadership body for the state of Minnesota, we represent our mighty membership of over 60 local electeds across the state. As local leaders, we are those closest to the communities we serve and one thing we have heard loud and clear is the critical need for a statewide Paid Family and Medical Leave program.

All of us at some point in life must take time away from work to care for ourselves or our loved ones, and we should not have to sacrifice economic stability to do so. Currently, the vast majority of Minnesotans don't have access to paid family and medical leave, with the burden falling heaviest on our low-wage workers, people of color, and women. We know all too well what this means for our communities – impossible choices each day between losing a paycheck or caring for a new child, an aging loved one, or themselves. The current system is not only unfair, but it's also costly to workers, families, small businesses, and our economy.

This year, Minnesota has a crucial opportunity – and the necessary funds, thanks to our historic budget surplus – to address this caregiving crisis. A statewide Paid Family and Medical Leave program is a long overdue, basic employment standard that is overwhelmingly popular across party lines. That's why it has already passed in 11 other states and the District of Columbia. And it's working as planned – improving health outcomes and quality of life for employees and leveling the playing field for small businesses to offer competitive benefits and improve worker retention. A Paid Family and Medical Leave program would also significantly improve maternal health, facilitate healthy child development, and give our communities a measure of economic security during life-changing events. For small business owners and teachers to medical professionals and personal caregivers, paid family and medical leave would be life-changing.

Minnesotans have spoken – and they are tired of having to choose between providing critical caregiving responsibilities and paying rent, keeping the lights on, or feeding their families.

We urge your immediate support.

Sincerely,

The Local Progress Minnesota Organizing Committee:

Mitra Jalali, St. Paul Councilmember (Co-Chair)

Robyn Gulley, West St. Paul City Councilmember (Co-Chair)

Trista Matascastillo, Ramsey County Board Chair

Thomas Brooks, Osseo School Board Member

Kimberly Wilburn, Minnetonka City Council

Azrin Awal, Duluth City Councilmember

Jen Westmoreland, Hopkins School Board Chair

About Local Progress Minnesota (LPMN)

LPMN organizes local elected officials across the state to share best practices and policy solutions across our counties, cities, towns, and school boards. LPMN currently has more than 60 members, representing the Twin Cities metro area and Greater Minnesota. The LPMN Organizing Committee are LPMN's member leaders who drive the strategic vision for Local Progress' work in the state.

About the Bill

The Paid Family & Medical Leave bill would create a statewide social insurance program that would provide up to 12 weeks of partial wage replacement for medical leave (including pregnancy), so Minnesotans can take care of themselves. In addition it would provide up to 12 weeks of partial wage replacement for family leave, so Minnesotans can take care of their loved ones such as a new child or ailing spouse. It would create a partial wage-replacement benefit on a progressive scale at 90%-55% of an employee's salary (66% on average), while protecting job and healthcare benefits, so Minnesotans can experience economic security during their leave. The program keeps costs low for all by creating a large statewide risk pool and equally sharing costs between employers and employees, with both contributing about 0.3% of employee earnings. For an average worker and their employer, this costs about \$3 per week. The program is built on a model similar to Minnesota's leading Unemployment Insurance administration under the Department of Employment and Economic Development, which would ensure program stability for employees, employers, and the state.