

February 22, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-2433, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker McCarthy, Minority Leader Jeffries, Majority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McConnell:

As we recognize the 30th anniversary of the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) this week, and reflect on the state of our Union, supporting American families remains an urgent national need. Despite the contentions of campaign cycles, paid family leave is an issue with broad bipartisan support. Now more than ever, families in our country need legislative support, especially a federal paid family leave policy after the birth or adoption of a new child. It is our hope that Congress will work together to craft a lasting, bipartisan plan for paid family leave.

Currently, only 23% of workers and 9% of those with low wages have access to parental leave. Imagine how dire the financial situation for a family must be when mothers are forced back to work within 10-14 days after giving birth. With both parents working in 64% of all households with children, unpaid leave could financially devastate some families. As you know, many women seeking abortion cite economic anxiety about the cost of the child as a contributing factor to their decision.

Some parents have been forced onto public assistance in order to spend those first few months with their new babies. Research confirms that mothers who have paid leave are 39% less likely to receive public assistance and 40% less likely to use food stamps. Paid leave keeps workers connected to the workforce and ready to return when their leave is over, increasing positive outcomes for the mother and the child. Since the parents continue to be taxpayers instead of government aid recipients, this also has a positive impact on the federal budget, deficit, and debt.

Early bonding with parents is crucial for children's long-term physical and mental health. The first few months of a baby's life are especially important for brain development. Studies show that infants whose mothers had at least three months of paid leave experience more complex brain development in their first months of life. The infant brain is highly elastic and develops positively when a baby experiences warm and predictable social interactions with parents. And in contrast, parental stress negatively impacts infant brain development. Consequently, paid leave

provides life-long benefits for child development by facilitating early bonding between infants and parents.

Federal paid leave resonates with a plurality of voters. According to a March 2022 Echelon survey, paid leave now has broad backing that crosses party lines (71%), with support coming from conservatives (65%), moderates (68%), liberals (83%), and all ethnicities. Paid leave can truly be called a bipartisan priority now. More statistics, media coverage, and survey results are available in this [Paid Leave Legislative Toolkit](#).

We are also encouraged to hear of the launch of the Bipartisan House Working Group on Paid Family Leave and the continued bipartisan work in the Senate. We hope Members of Congress will continue exploring innovative ways to support families struggling under the current cost of living to meet their financial ends.

As leaders of the 118th Congress, would you prioritize working towards a bipartisan paid leave plan so that all families, regardless of income level, have the best opportunity to start off strong and healthy?

We know there are many urgent issues that come before you daily, but none are more important than policies that serve our youngest citizens and the common good.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Rick Santorum

Former U.S. Senator, Pennsylvania
Chairman, Patriot Voices

Mike Huckabee

Former Governor of Arkansas

Terry Schilling

Executive Director, American Principles Project

Kathryn Jean Lopez

Senior Fellow, National Review Institute

Kristan Hawkins, President

Students for Life of America & Students for Life Action

Walter Kim

President, National Association of Evangelicals

Timothy R. Head

Executive Director, Faith & Freedom Coalition

Brian Walsh

Executive Director, Faith and Giving Coalition

Rusty Reno

Editor, First Things

Brad Wilcox

Future of Freedom Fellow, Institute for Family Studies

Patrick T. Brown

Fellow, Ethics and Public Policy Center

Michael Toscano

Executive Director, The Institute for Family Studies

Tony Lowden

Pastor, Jabez Ministries

Carlos Duran

President, National Hispanic Pastors Alliance

Samuel Rodriguez

New Season-Lead Pastor, NHCLC President/CEO

Bishop Dean Nelson

Chairman, Douglass Leadership Institute

Carlos Campo, Ph.D.

President, Ashland University and Theological Seminary

Rev. Dr. David Gray

Senior Fellow, Niskanen Center

Abby McCloskey
Founder, McCoskey Policy LLC

Mark Rodgers
Principal, The Clapham Group

Kelly M. Rosati, J.D.
CEO, KMR Consulting

Nadine Maenza
Senior Advisor, Patriot Voices

Michael Hernon
President, The Messy Family Project

**Affiliations are for identification purposes only.*