

FAMILIES VALUED:
*Protecting
Time to Care*



THE CENTER FOR
PUBLIC JUSTICE



Families Valued: Protecting Time to Care

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About the Center for Public Justice



The Center for Public Justice (CPJ) is an independent, non-partisan, Christian organization devoted to policy research and civic education. Our mission is to equip citizens, develop leaders, and shape policy to serve God, advance justice and transform public life. Learn more at cpjustice.org



Families Valued, an initiative of CPJ, researches and promotes public policies and workplace practices that honor God's call to both work and family life. Learn more at familiesvalued.org

Welcome

Perhaps you have had a new baby or a loved one who needed your care. Perhaps you had the opportunity to spend precious time with that newborn, aging parent, or adopted son or daughter and want others to have that blessing. Or perhaps you hoped to have more time than you did. Perhaps you are convicted by God's calling to help all families to flourish.

There is growing evidence that paid family leave can help families and children to flourish. Paid family leave protects family time and family care during critical seasons of life.

Although the U.S. has distinguished itself as one of the few nations around the globe that does not guarantee paid parental leave, there are signs that this reality could change. New ideas and policies have been proposed that would create a system of paid family leave for all families. At present, six states have enacted paid family leave programs for their residents, and two proposals have been introduced in Congress. Members of both political parties have expressed a commitment to paid family leave, and business leaders are taking note of the cost of doing nothing in terms of lost talent and exhausted workers.

But it takes a great deal of work to move from idea to program. Promoting a society and systems that help families to flourish requires the effort of many.

Please join us in making the case for paid family leave. This could mean sharing the case for paid family leave in publications and social media, encouraging organizations to adopt family-supportive policies, and advocating for paid family leave with public officials.

This handbook can help you make the case for paid family leave. In the following pages, we outline seven elements that will help make that case. These elements reflect Christian commitments about the dignity and value of life, family, and work. The final section provides supporting information for each element of the case for paid family leave. The appendix lists supporting material published by the Center for Public Justice and other Christian organizations as well as descriptions of other tools and resources of interest.

We welcome your questions and look forward to working together in support of families and family time.

With gratitude,

Rachel Anderson & Kelly Rosati



The Case for Paid Family Leave

Paid family leave is pro-family. When we respect and protect family caregiving, we strengthen our whole society.

Paid family leave is pro-child. In the first months of life, a parent's touch, sound, and attention are the foundation for a healthy brain, healthy body, and healthy relationships.

Paid family leave is pro-life. Paid family leave is associated with fewer preterm births, higher birth weights, and lower infant mortality.

Paid family leave can address system challenges. Low-income workers have the least access to personal savings or workplace benefits (paid sick or vacation days) to cover time off for family care.

Paid family leave reflects God's good design for work and family life. Work is intended to support and provide for family life, rather than prevent family care.

Paid family leave supports economic vitality. Many businesses and nonprofit organizations strive to retain good workers and create family-friendly workplaces. Paid family leave can help realize these goals.

Paid family leave represents a rare bipartisan opportunity. Citizens and policy-makers can work to create a system of paid family leave that balances financial stewardship with practical support.

Going Deeper: Building the Case for Paid Family Leave

Paid family leave is just one of many pieces of support for families, children, and healthy work. It is one piece of a larger vision of family flourishing. But it is a step with good evidence behind it and a growing number of supporters. We summarize that evidence and the current trends here.

Paid Family Leave is Pro-Family.

The health of families and of society are bound up with one another. It takes healthy families to sustain a healthy, functioning society. When we respect and protect family caregiving, we strengthen our whole society.

Welcoming a new child is wonderful, and it is hard. The transition to parenthood is stressful for men, women, and marriages throughout the first year postpartum.¹ In turn, marital adversity in early childbearing years is associated with weakened parent-child relationships.²

A family's capacity to shape time according to their needs helps families flourish and fulfill their calling to care for children and the vulnerable. Children who grow up with solid family rituals such as regular shared meals typically demonstrated greater resiliency and mental health.³ Families spending time together with a new child helps establish and model family togetherness from the very beginning of a child's life.

Family leave can support parental well-being and foster healthy family relationships.

- Research has linked workplace problems facing pregnant women to negative relationship dynamics years after the pregnancy.⁴ Workplace-related stress following childbirth could, similarly, have a negative impact on couples.
- Mothers with a paid maternity leave report fewer depressive symptoms, reduction of severe depression, and improved overall and mental health.⁵

Family leave can enable parent-child bonding.

Fathers who take at least two weeks of leave for a new child are more likely to be actively involved in the care of a child nine months after birth.⁶

Many Americans feel they have too little time for family or medical care.

A survey from the Pew Research Center⁷ found:

- 16% of adults say they needed or wanted to take family or medical leave in the past two years and were unable to do so.
- 69% of adults who did take family or medical leave in the past two years said they took less time than they needed or wanted to because they could not afford to lose more wages or salary (and, presumably, lacked a wage replacement).
- 56% of those who took parental leave in the past two years said they took less time off than they needed or wanted to.

Families in Scripture

From creation to the prophets' visions of *shalom*, Scripture presents family life as fundamental to human life and to society. The family is a community of covenant love and trust, with each member bearing responsibility toward the others. The family bond holds for a lifetime of its members and reaches back to grandparents, ahead to grandchildren, and out to aunts, uncles, and cousins.⁸

"Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him." (Genesis 2:18)

"God blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it." (Genesis 1:28)

"Honor your father and mother, that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." (Exodus 20:12)

"Hear, my son, your father's instruction. And do not forsake your mother's teaching." (Proverbs 1:8)

"Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters. Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile." (Jeremiah 29:5-7)

Paid Family Leave is Pro-Child.

Early parent-child interactions are crucial to child health.

Parents have a crucial role in protecting and nurturing children. Science offers convincing evidence for this. Scientists increasingly trace child brain development to early interactions with loved ones. In the first months of life, a parent's touch, sound, and attention are the foundation for a healthy brain, healthy body, and healthy relationships. In sum, children flourish in the context of family.

- Twenty percent of new mothers return to work only a few weeks after giving birth to a child.⁹ This means many mothers have less of the time needed for healthy child development.
- The future mental health of children is related to their early bonding experiences,¹⁰ meaning the role of reliable, quality care from a caregiver in early life is imperative to a healthy future.
- In the first few weeks of life, infants' immune systems are rapidly developing but not yet mature. Doctors often recommend protecting children from infection and viruses.¹¹ Earlier returns to work by mothers are correlated with fewer regular medical checkups and less breastfeeding.¹² Without paid, job-protected time from work, parents are not able to protect their children's health the way children need.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that babies be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life.¹³ Studies demonstrate that mothers who have maternity leave breastfeed longer with greater frequency than mothers who do not have leave.¹⁴ A recent study found that one state's paid family leave program boosted breastfeeding by an average of 18 days with the largest impact for disadvantaged mothers.¹⁵

Compassion for children is at the heart of the Christian faith.

Jesus' ministry and teachings indicate distinct compassion for children. Scripture reminds us to protect those who are vulnerable.

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:14)

"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40)

Paid Family Leave is Pro-Life.

Paid family leave is associated with fewer preterm births, higher birth weights, and lower infant mortality.

Although there are many factors to consider, the evidence is clear: paid family leave that protects a loving connection between baby and parent makes a difference.

- The United States has 5.8 infant deaths for every 1,000 children born. This rate is 71 percent higher than the comparable country average.¹⁶
- Studies show paid family leave reduces low birth-weights in infants and contributes to fewer preterm births, both leading causes of infant death.¹⁷ Paid, job-protected maternity leave has been associated with reducing neonatal, infant, and under-five deaths.¹⁸
- Implementation of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) led to a significant reduction in infant mortality among those parents who were able to spend time with new children because of the unpaid leave provided by FMLA.¹⁹

Family care is important at the end-of-life.

For those in the final third of their lives, physical and cognitive decline, isolation, and financial stagnation are common barriers to flourishing and, if ignored, can lead to suffering. Family caregiving can meet these challenges.

- Approximately 41.3 million Americans provide unpaid elder care,²⁰ and that number is set to grow substantially as the baby boomers become our next generation of elders.
- They spend, on average, nearly three hours a day providing care,²¹ and can spend nearly \$7,000 per year²² on out-of-pocket expenses related to caregiving.
- Approximately 1.43 million Medicare beneficiaries receive hospice care each year.²³ Family care can require a high level of skill, such as dressing changes for wounds, bathing, catheter care, and managing opioids and other pain medications.

Paid Family Leave Can Address System Challenges.

Low-income workers have the least access to paid family leave benefits from their employers.

- Only 17% of workers have access to a formal paid family leave program.
- Only 8% of workers in the lowest wage quartile have access to paid family leave.²⁴

Low-income workers have the least access to any form of paid time off to cover family care.

- On average, workers have access to 11 paid vacation days²⁵ and eight paid sick days.²⁶
- Of the lowest quarter of wage earners, only about half have access to paid sick leave (47%) or paid vacations (53%).²⁷
- Exhausting these benefits leaves workers without time for their own rest and recovery days or periodic medical visits.

Many part-time and contingent workers also lack paid leave benefits.

Part-time and contingent workers have less access to paid benefits compared with their full-time counterparts. 40% of part-time workers have paid sick leave and 38% have paid vacations.²⁸

In the absence of paid leave benefits, many households need to use household savings or family wealth. But some households lack this financial buffer.

People in lower income levels also have lower wealth levels, which creates increased financial pressure to work rather than help with crucial family care.

- Over half (62%) of households with incomes below \$30,000 received no pay while on leave.²⁹
- Only 35% of married couples with children have at least three months of liquid savings.³⁰
- Three in 10 adults have family income that varies from month to month; 1 in 10 experience hardship as a result.³¹
- Families of color are less likely to have household wealth to cover family leave. In 2016, the median wealth of white households was \$171,000 — 10 times the wealth of black households (\$17,100), and eight times that of Hispanic households (\$20,600).³²
- Over half of parents who took parental leave say they took less time off from work than needed; 69% of those parents said they could not afford to lose more income.³³

Paid Family Leave Reflects God's Good Design for Work and Family Life.

Christians believe that work and family life should complement and harmonize with one another rather than conflict. Work is intended to support and provide for family life, rather than prevent family care or produce chronic stress and tension.

The Sabbath reminds us that God placed limits on human work and helps us value the distinct seasons of human life, including family time. Our organizational cultures and consumer habits should honor the need for both rest and family unity.

Exhaustion from the dual demands of work and caregiving can take a financial and psychological toll.

- 80% of mothers surveyed by Barna, a Christian research group, report being overwhelmed by stress.³⁴
- In 2015, more than 43 million adult Americans provided unpaid care to a loved one such as an elder family member or other adult with an illness. Six out of 10 unpaid caregivers were also employed.³⁵
- Six out of 10 unpaid caregivers employed outside the home report needing to make workplace accommodations as a result of caregiving responsibilities.³⁶ Caregivers cut back on their hours, take leaves of absence, accept negative impacts on their work performance and attendance, and even voluntarily leave jobs in order to fulfill their care responsibilities.
- Over a lifetime, caregivers lose on average \$659,139 in wages, social security, and pension benefits that they would have otherwise received.³⁷
- The role of a caregiver is stressful and linked with both decreased physical and psychological health.³⁸ Working caregivers with limited support exhaust themselves emotionally, financially, and spiritually in trying to be faithful to their work and care callings.

Caregiving burden can impact the workplace.

Researchers at the Harvard Business School's Managing the Future of Work project surveyed employers and employees about family and work. They found that employers are widely unaware of their workers' caregiving responsibilities, or the extent to which caregiving impacts work performance or burdens workers.³⁹ They also found that:

- 73% of employees surveyed report having a current caregiving responsibility. More than 80% indicated that caregiving affected their ability to perform their best at work.

- Only 24% of employers thought that caregiving influenced workers' performance. And fewer than half of the employers surveyed track data on their employees' caregiving responsibilities.
- Unreconciled work and family tensions can lead men and women to leave a job. 32% of employees surveyed that they had left a job at some point in their career because of caregiving responsibilities.

Paid Family Leave Supports Economic Vitality.

Many businesses and nonprofit organizations strive to retain good workers and create family-friendly workplaces. Paid family leave can help realize these goals.

Many major companies are adopting paid family leave programs.

An increasing number of large and name-brand companies are adopting paid-family leave and other family-supportive workplace policies. One survey identified over 100 companies that had announced new or expanded paid leave policies since 2015.⁴⁰ Among the corporations that have recently expanded or offered paid family leave: 3M, Campbell Soup Company, Dollar General, IKEA, Johnson & Johnson, Microsoft, Starbucks, and Walmart.⁴¹

In surveys and interviews with major companies and human resources leaders, the Boston Consulting Group found that employers believed paid family leave was good for their workers and had clear benefits for their organizations.⁴²

Business leaders have identified multiple benefits from paid family leave.

- **Attracting talented employees.** In an online poll by the Deloitte consulting firm, 77% of workers said that access to parental leave benefits would influence their choice of employer.⁴³
- **Boosting workplace engagement and morale.** More than 80% of companies with paid family leave who were surveyed by EY consultants reported that it had a positive impact on morale.⁴⁴
- **Improving productivity.** The EY survey also found 70% of companies with paid family leave felt it improved employee productivity.⁴⁵ Improved productivity may be a consequence of improved engagement or of workers experiencing less distraction or multitasking on the job if they have the time to attend to family responsibilities at home.
- **Reducing employee turnover.** Firms spend at least \$4000 each time they must replace a worker.⁴⁶ Several major corporations told the Boston Consulting Group that their retention of female employees improved significantly after implementing or improving paid family leave programs.⁴⁷ And employee retention is the most common reason cited by employers for implementing family-friendly programs generally.⁴⁸

Well-designed public policies can help smaller enterprises and nonprofits in paid leave's economic benefits.

Emerging paid family leave programs from major companies signal how valuable these programs may be to families and organizations alike. Yet, many other employers say that cost is a major obstacle to offering paid family leave benefits.⁴⁹ This may be particularly true for the smaller employers who employ approximately half of the U.S. workforce⁵⁰ and contribute significantly to the country's economic vitality.

Public policies that create state-wide or national systems of paid family leave would help address some of the costs that most worry employers. Below are some of the best practices in policy design that address common employer barriers relating to paid family and medical leave. All of these approaches leave room for organizations to provide even more generous benefits to their employees.

Employer Barrier	Public Policy Best Practice
<p>Direct cost of paid family leave: paying wages while an employee is not at work.</p>	<p>Six states have developed paid family leave programs through which workers can receive a portion of pay while on maternity, paternity, or family leave. In several of these states, family care leaves are funded entirely through employee payroll taxes. Employers do not bear any direct costs for paid family leave.⁵¹</p> <p>Two states create tax exemptions from small employers while providing both family and medical leave coverage for their workers.⁵²</p>
<p>Indirect cost of paid family leave: lost productivity or hiring temporary employees while an employee is on leave.</p>	<p>Washington state offers a grant to help small employers cover administrative and replacement costs while employees are on leave.⁵³</p>

Paid Family Leave Supports the Sacred Sector.

Paid family leave can help sacred sector employers uphold their sacred beliefs and value their workers.

Sacred sector organizations recently surveyed by Seattle Pacific University's Center for Integrity in Business value family-supportive practices and connect family-supportive practices with their identities and missions.⁵⁴

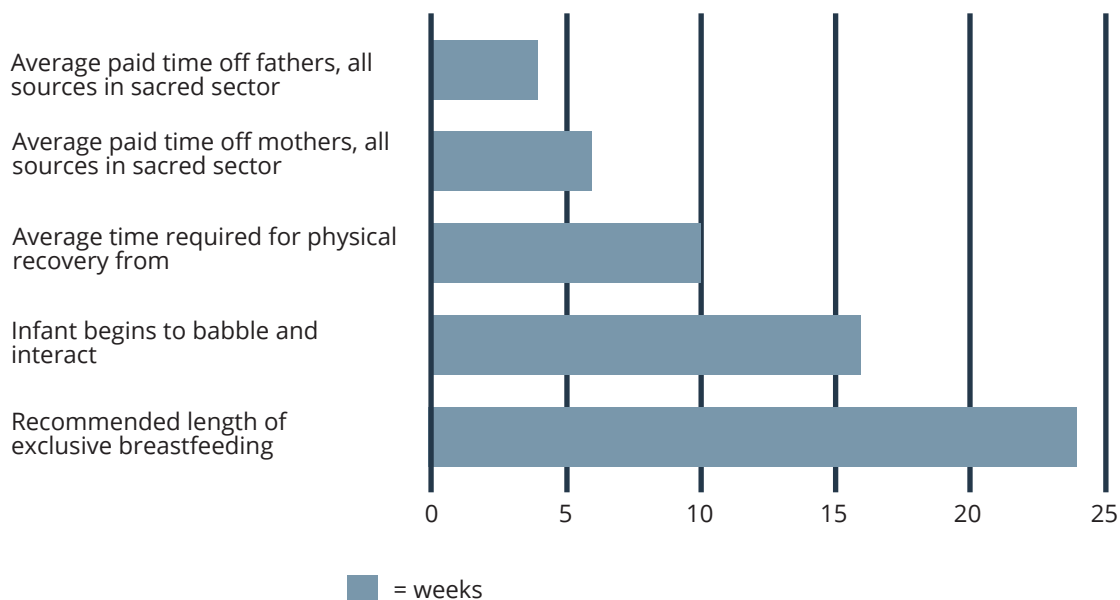
The sacred sector refers to the wide range of faith-based organizations that conduct community activities or provide goods and services, and are places of work for employees, contract workers, and volunteers. Altogether, the sacred sector comprises a significant portion of the American economy. By one measure, faith-based organizations are responsible for \$1.2 trillion in economic activity, measured in annual revenues.⁵⁵

Some faith-based organizations cannot offer as much paid leave to employees as they would like.

The recent survey of sacred sector employers found that male and female employees received only four to six weeks paid time off after the birth of a child respectively. But to do so would require an employee to exhaust all sick, vacation, and disability insurance as well as any formal paid family leave.⁵⁶

Employees based in states with higher legal requirements and/or publicly funded paid leave programs received more time off for family care, measured in this study as paid time off after childbirth.

Paid time off after childbirth, all sources, compared to health and development benchmarks



Paid Family Leave Represents a Rare Bipartisan Opportunity

Citizens and policy-makers can work to create a system of paid family leave that balances financial stewardship with practical support. A majority of Americans agree the time has come for paid family leave to be available to workers.⁵⁷

Public officials, organizations, and leaders from diverse parties and backgrounds have called for paid family leave.

“It’s time to give parents the flexibility they need to be with them at the most crucial times of their lives. . . . Republicans need to roll up their sleeves, reach across the aisle, and get a new federal paid-leave program enacted. Paid parental leave is good policy and good politics.” —Rick Santorum, *National Review*⁵⁸

“While there are disagreements about the policy’s design, how we fund it, how long the leave lasts, who pays, and who is eligible, absolutely no one disagrees that working families in America today need to have access to some paid time off when a baby is born or adopted.” —AEI-Brookings Working Group on Paid Family Leave⁵⁹

“[N]o working American should ever have to choose between their family members and a paycheck, but if you don’t have paid leave, that’s exactly the choice you have to make and this is especially true if you are working in a low-wage job.” —Sen Kirsten Gillibrand (CD - New York)⁶⁰

“Not only is it important for Americans to be able to afford to start and expand families but having the time to nurture new life is likely to produce healthier children down the road.” —Sen Mike Lee (R - Utah)⁶¹

“The bottom line is that families need policies that will help them thrive, not just survive. Those of us religious conservatives who have been active in the pro-life movement should be unhesitant about insisting on a results-oriented debate.” —Kathryn Jean Lopez & Kelly M. Rosati, *National Review*⁶²

“This is an issue that has bipartisan support; if Democrats and Republicans can come together and compromise on the details of what they want, bipartisan legislation is possible.” —Aparna Mathur, *AEI*⁶³

“The issue of paid family and medical leave is getting more attention and for good reason. . . [F]amilies are increasingly struggling with work life balance. Children do better when parents can leave work temporarily to care for them, though many cannot afford to do this.” —Aparna Mathur and Isabel V. Sawhill, AEI-Brookings Working Group on Paid Family Leave⁶⁴

Christian commitments to family and to dignified work provide a distinctive basis for paid family leave.

As Christians, we are motivated to advocate for paid family leave policy because of God's desire for families to be healthy and for work to be dignifying - reasons that matter regardless of political or partisan preference.

A variety of policy proposals for paid family leave have and will be offered at the state and federal level. Christians can be promote good options by taking a principled approach.

"From the first pages of the Bible we see the central role of the family in God's plan for human flourishing. . . A biblical vision of family entails mutual care in the vulnerable seasons of life including birth, illness, disability and death. . .] Allowing time for family care leads to healthier children and families. It is the right thing to do, and it need not break the bank." —National Association of Evangelicals, Paid Family Leave Resolution⁶⁵

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Appendix

The Center for Public Justice’s Principles for Paid Family Leave

Motivating Principles

Healthy Families – Families are the foundation of healthy communities and societies.

Dignity of Work – There is inherent dignity in work of all types.

Applied Principles	Description
Dignity of All Workers	God intends each person to reflect the Imago Dei through work. Time for family care should not be a privilege for a few but a pervasive practice that reflects the dignity of all workers.
Honoring Caregiving	Family caregiving – be it for a new child or an ailing or aging family member – is worthy work that should be recognized and supported.
Practical Support	Assistance to workers should effectively empower all families to care for and be administered well.
Address System Challenges	Address unique barriers for households with low-income or without the advantage of family wealth.
Support Economic Vitality	Policy should support healthy businesses and nonprofit enterprises.
Financial Stewardship	Steward well both resources provided and costs allocated for family-supportive policies and practices.

State Laws on Paid Family Leave

California

6 weeks of paid family leave concurrent with FMLA.

District of Columbia

8 weeks of paid parental leave, 6 weeks of paid family care leave. Administration of paid benefits will not begin until July 2020.

New Jersey

6 weeks paid family leave for child, partner, spouse, or parent and concurrent with other family leave programs.

New York

8 weeks paid time off for parenting and caregiving. Increasing to 12 weeks in 2020.

Rhode Island

4 weeks of paid family leave for parenting and caregiving.

Washington

12 weeks of paid family leave for parenting and caregiving. Administration of benefits will not begin until January 2020.

Note: In each of these states, paid leave for parental care, family care, and parent-child bonding is paired with a paid medical leave. The medical leave portion is not included in these summaries.

National Association of Evangelicals, Paid Family Leave

Board Motion, 2019.

“Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him.” Psalm 127:3

“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” Exodus 20:12

From the first pages of the Bible we see the central role of the family in God’s plan for human flourishing. God entrusts fathers and mothers with the care of their children. Science confirms the wisdom of God’s plan, revealing the critical importance of loving nurture between parents and newborns in promoting healthy brain development.[i] Children repay their debt when as adults they care for their elderly parents. A biblical vision of family entails mutual care in the vulnerable seasons of life including birth, illness, disability and death.

For too many families, however, work responsibilities and financial need prevent them from taking the time needed to bond with their baby or care for an elderly loved one. Only 6 percent of low-income workers, 5 percent of part-time workers, and 10 percent of small business employees receive any paid parental leave.[ii] As a result, one in four mothers returns to work within two weeks of giving birth. Nine in 10 fathers who don’t have paid leave go back to work within one week.

There is a growing bipartisan consensus that we can do better. Most rich countries invest far more in supporting families than we do.[iii] Allowing time for family care leads to healthier children and families. It is the right thing to do, and it need not break the bank.

Several models for paid family leave have been proposed. The expense can be shared by workers, employers and taxpayers. To control costs, programs can provide a minimum baseline of paid leave with greater assistance concentrated on low-income workers who may not otherwise be able to afford taking time off for family care.

The following principles can guide wise decisions by parents, employers and lawmakers:

- Parents bear the primary responsibility for the nurture and protection of their children. They should manage their finances and time in a way that prioritizes their children, particularly at the beginning of life, as well as provide for elderly, sick or disabled family members.
- Employers should be generous with employees who have care-giving responsibilities, giving them paid time off as feasible and offering flexible schedules, where possible, to help them balance work and family responsibilities.

- Lawmakers should enact reasonable policies and incentives and create fiscally responsible financial support mechanisms to enable all parents to take time off after childbirth, adoption and during family emergencies without suffering undue financial hardship.

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National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, Life Manifesto

March 2019.

1. We believe and affirm that God created men and women in his image and that every human being, without exception, bears the imprint of God, the imago Dei.

(Genesis 1: 26-28)

2. We believe in the sanctity and dignity of every human life from conception to natural death.

3. We commit to speaking up for those who can't speak for themselves (Proverbs 31:8), including unborn children, their mothers, and all vulnerable people whose lives are at risk from violence, preventable disease and anti-life public policy such as abortion and euthanasia.

4. We stand in support of women facing unexpected pregnancies with word and deed at the local and national levels, through our churches and in our public policy. We affirm the bipartisan efforts to provide paid family leave so that pregnant mothers can choose life for their babies and so that parents and children will have the time necessary for family flourishing as family is the foundation of society.

5. We affirm that as to all these things, through the love of the Father, in the name of the Son, Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we will not grow weary in well doing. (Galatians 6:9)