



Connecticut Campaign for

PAID FAMILY LEAVE

COMMUNITY ACTION TOOLKIT

About the CT Campaign for Paid Family Leave

The Campaign for Paid Family Leave is a coalition of organizations advocating for the passage and implementation of a comprehensive system of paid family and medical leave for Connecticut workers who need to take time off to care for themselves or an ill loved one. Our coalition includes more than 70 organizations across Connecticut that represent a variety of interests: eldercare, women's health, racial justice, children's groups, labor unions, special needs, religious groups, low-income advocacy organizations, long-term illnesses and pediatrics.

The Campaign is led by the CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) with a Steering Committee of five other organizations: AARP-CT, Make the Road CT, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, SEIU 32BJ and CT Working Families.

Why Paid Family & Medical Leave?

Currently, both the state and the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provide only unpaid leave to workers who have a serious medical condition, need to care for an ill family member, for the birth or adoption of a child, to serve as an organ or bone marrow donor, or to care for an injured member of the military.

While FMLA has provided unpaid, job-protected leave to millions of workers since it was passed in the early 1990s, it is inaccessible to too many workers. Federal and state laws apply only to larger companies of 50 or more employees, which leaves out approximately 40% of the workforce. In other words, 40% of the workforce can lose their jobs if they become seriously ill, need to care for an ill family member, or decide to grow their family either by birth or adoption.

Even among workers who are covered by the FMLA, many choose not to take leave because they simply can't afford to go without consecutive paychecks. When a worker is seriously ill, taking care of a loved one who is seriously ill, or celebrating the birth of a baby, the last worry on their mind should be missing a paycheck or falling behind on paying bills or medical expenses.

The Campaign recommends a system of paid family and medical leave that is: *affordable* for all CT workers and businesses; *accessible* for all CT workers who need to take all kinds of leave (medical, parental and caregiving); and *adequate* and provides enough time for family care or healing.

CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATOR

One quick way to get involved in the Campaign for Paid Family Leave: call your State Representative and Senator and tell them why paid family and medical leave is important to you.

Unsure of who represents you? Check out the CT General Assembly's website, www.cga.ct.gov. Scroll to the middle of the page to the "Find Your Legislator" box. Insert your town, street name and number and click Find to bring you to your district's elected officials! Click on your Representative or Senator's NAME to bring you to their website, and click on their TITLE to bring you to an automatic email message sent to their address.

You can also speak with legislators face to face at town hall meetings. Go to their official website (through cga.ct.gov or by searching their name) or their Facebook page to view their upcoming events. Sometimes they have monthly coffee hours or meet-ups to engage with residents in addition to town hall meetings. Subscribe to their email list if possible to stay informed on upcoming events.

A few tips for calling your elected official:

1. Identify yourself by name and the town you're calling from.
2. Explain your reason for calling (that you support paid leave). Follow the Campaign's talking points or briefly share your own story. Ask your legislator (or the legislative aide who will likely answer the phone) his/her position on paid leave.
3. Request a written response to your phone call or a phone call back if you did not speak to your legislative member. If the legislator requires further information, be sure provide it as soon as possible.
4. Thank the person who took the phone call for their time and consideration.

Sample Script:

Hello Representative/Senator ____, My name is [YOUR NAME] and I strongly support paid family and medical leave. Too many workers in our state are forced to choose between their own health, the family they love and the job they need. As a regular voter in this state, paid family and medical leave is a big concern of mine. [IF YOU HAVE A PERSONAL STORY, BRIEFLY STATE IT HERE - see next page for tips on sharing your story]

I hope you will do your part in making paid leave a reality this session by supporting paid family and medical leave. Thank you.

SHARE YOUR STORY

By sharing your story and raising YOUR voice, you build the case for paid family and medical leave here in Connecticut. Why is paid leave important to you, your family, or your community? [Share your story here.](#)

Why is it important to share your story?

By sharing YOUR story, you put a face to the issue of paid leave and give it a voice. When you share your story, whether with a legislator, your own network, or through the Campaign's Story Bank, it allows listeners or readers to understand the depth, reality and impact the lack of paid family and medical leave has on workers and families in CT.

When you share your story, with a legislator or anyone else, remember:

- Your story cannot be wrong. It is YOUR personal experience. Your experience has value and meaning.
- If you're talking to a lawmaker, you don't need to know all the answers! Just have a clear "ask" in mind (ex: please support paid leave) and state how this issue has impacted you.

A few tips for sharing your story:

1. Do paint a realistic picture.

If the lack of paid leave has impacted your life in some way, share what your life was like before you had to take paid leave and what it was like after you were able or unable to.

2. Don't be afraid to be genuine.

It is okay to get emotional while sharing your story, both in person and in your writing. Don't be afraid to show your fear, rage, pain, and anything other emotions you've felt while experiencing the need for paid leave.

3. Keep it brief and stick to the highlights.

Storytelling is similar to a movie trailer—just give your audience the parts that grab their attention and leave them wanting to know more. When they ask questions, you've caught their attention.

HOST A HOUSE PARTY

Hosting a house party is a great way to help the Campaign for Paid Family Leave reach out to new people and educate communities about the need for paid leave in our state.

Tips for throwing a paid family and medical leave-themed house party:

1. Plan the essentials.

Make sure you determine the date, time and location for your party. Then create your guest list - invite co-workers, friends, family members or anyone you feel comfortable talking about paid leave with. Your party can be as big or small as you'd like.

2. Set your goal.

What do you want to get out of your house party? You can start off by introducing the topic and educating your guests about the importance of paid leave, or you can spring right into action and ask everyone in attendance to write letters to their State Representative or Senator.

3. Use Campaign resources.

Give your guests Campaign fact sheets and information to take home. Download this year's fact sheet [here](#) and check out www.paidfamilyleavect.org for additional information. Make sure to pass around a sign-in sheet for attendees who want to join the Campaign's mailing list.

4. Turn your guests into activists!

Contact mgranato@cwealf.org with the names and email addresses of any attendees who would like to sign up to receive our action alerts. In your follow-up message, include how the event went and any other feedback.

WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR TO YOUR LOCAL NEWS OUTLET

Writing letters to the editor (LTE) of local and regional newspapers is one effective way to reach a large public audience and elected officials about the importance of paid leave. Local news outlets always want to hear from their local readers.

A few tips for writing an effective letter to the editor (LTE):

1. **Pay close attention to word count requirements.** These requirements are usually found in print and online on the same page the letters are published. If you can't find this information, call the newspaper and ask! LTEs are short: as few as 250 words are usually the maximum. Try to keep your sentences short, too.
2. **Open strong with a good hook and with the most important information at the top of your letter.** The first paragraph should include the "who, what, where and when." You can explain "why" in the rest of the letter. Tip -- Editors keep an eye out for: subject matter that is generating a lot of attention or controversy; something that is timely like a bill coming up for a hearing or was voted on; a fresh or new take on an issue
3. **Reference a recent story and include the link in your letter.** Editors are usually more responsive to letters that reference a previous article in its own publication. Be on the lookout for articles about paid leave in your local news outlet. Timing is important. Try to respond within a 3-4 day window of the article's publication.
4. **Share your story.** This is where you explain "why." In 2-3 sentences, briefly state why paid family and medical leave is important to you personally. Why are you submitting this letter?
5. **Always include a strong call to action** at the end of your letter. For example, "I urge legislators to pass paid family and medical leave legislation this session."
6. **Email your letter.** An email address for the letter to the editor section of the newspaper will likely be found on its editorial page, either in print or online. In your signature line, make sure to include your name, telephone number, email address and mailing address so the newspaper can verify that you wrote the letter. Only your name and city will be published.
7. Don't be afraid to **call the editor** to flag your submission to their attention. Let she/he know that you are alerting them to the submission in response to a recent story they

wrote (if applicable). Editors tend to receive plenty of submissions every week. Most editors will appreciate the head's up.

Sample Letter:

Norwich Bulletin: Letter: Paid Family Leave is a Win-Win for Employees

<http://www.norwichbulletin.com/opinion/20170301/letter-paid-family-leave-win-win-for-business-employees>

I am a small business owner — I run the Heirloom Food Company in Danielson — and I support Paid Family and Medical Leave.

There's a lot of discussion about whether paid family and medical leave is good for business and employees. It's a win-win for both.

First, there's no risk to the employer and it's the right thing to do. Under the current proposal, the program would be fully funded through a small payroll deduction, about one half of one percent.

For my business to be successful, not only do I have to keep my customers happy, but also my employees. A happy workforce makes for a stronger business.

These benefits ultimately save businesses money and increase the bottom line while keeping employees happy and productive.

As a working mother, I understand the benefits of having the security to take time off when a child is born without losing income.

Similar policies are already in place in Rhode Island, New York and New Jersey. Connecticut can't get left behind.

Paid family medical leave is the right thing to do.

I urge this committee and the legislature to pass this policy.

Wendy Garosshen

Danielson

ENGAGE YOUR LOCAL/MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Engaging your local/municipal elected officials is the most accessible way to express your ideas and concerns. It demonstrates importance to officials and encourages them to take action.

1. Email/call your local officials.

Contact your mayor, board of selectman, town council members, or committee chairs through email or phone listed on your town/city's website. Provide a simple explanation about why paid leave is important to you and how other local residents are concerned about it too. They will then guide you and give you a suggestion on future action.

2. Create a petition to demonstrate community support.

Collect signatures from family, friends, community members, and local businesses. The more signatures, the better! Then, download the petition and bring it with you to a meeting or town hall to present to your local officials.

3. Attend a town council, board of selectmen, or a town committee meeting.

Visit your town or city's official website to see when and where the next meeting will take place. Create talking points on why you support paid leave. Feel free to use the talking points available in this toolkit or on the Campaign's website, www.paidfamilyleavect.org.

Tips for communicating your message at a town or city council meeting:

- Give thought to your talking points and write them down before the meeting.
- Share your story - why is paid leave important to you? How would paid leave benefit you and your family?
- Be aware of time allotments. Some meeting rules allow for only a set amount of time per speaker. Speak respectfully.

TALK WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES

1. Make Connections

- Think of businesses you already frequent such as your local coffee shop, breakfast spot or boutique.
- Ask in person at the place of business who might be best to speak to about signing onto the Campaign as a supportive business. If the manager/owner isn't available, make sure to follow up on when and how to contact them with your request. Also, feel free to leave our Business Engagement form! (info below)

2. Educate and Advocate

- Use and personalize these talking points about how paid family and medical leave benefits business, small and large:
 - When workers don't have access to paid leave, they're more likely to need to leave their jobs.
 - Paid leave improves worker retention and saves employers expensive turnover costs.
 - After 10 years of paid leave in CA, employers overwhelmingly reported positive or neutral impact on their business.
 - Paid leave increased morale and productivity among CA employees.

3. Use our [Business Engagement Form](#)

- Remember to say thank you and inform the business that by signing on to the Campaign, they'll receive promotion about their support for paid leave.

4. Follow up with a Campaign organizer

- Let us know that you have a lead on a supportive business so we can follow up! Email Maddie Granato (mgranato@cwealf.org) or Sarah Ganong (sganong@workingfamilies.org) with the business' completed Business Engagement form.

**FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES,
VISIT WWW.PAIDFAMILYLEAVECT.ORG**

Hand-outs

- [2019 Talking Points](#)
- [What You Can Do flyer](#)

Other links:

- [Share Your Story](#)
- Snap a [Selfie](#) to Support Paid Leave