

Doc. 1281

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Conversation: Are you crazy?

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Subject: Are you crazy?

"A Harvard study of 168 countries found that only 4 don't offer some form of paid leave for new mothers--Papua New Guinea, Swaziland, Lesotho, and the United States of America."

That's crazy. I heard that there are plans to "scale back" the FMLA.... Which is even crazier. It should not be retracted, it should be expanded. Switzerland offers 1 full year PAID parental leave... and the US only offers a few months of UNPAID leave... no wonder our kids are so messed up and post partum depression is on the rise in the US. Not to mention PPD related deaths. For a country that is supposedly so "enlightened" and "advanced" we sure are -backwards about our priorities...

"The FMLA is a good start, but we can do better. The ability for parents to take leave without fear of loosing their job is important. That said, "Paid leave significantly decreases infant mortality, while other leave has no significant effect. This suggests that if leave is provided without adequate payment and job protection, parental leave-taking behavior may not be very responsive.... As a result, other leave does not have a significant effect on improving infant health," notes an Economic Journal report. In other words, it's paid family leave that makes the big difference."

Only 46.5% of private sector workers are currently covered under the law because it only applies to those who work in companies with 50 or more employees, I work for a company of only 6 employees – what happens if I get pregnant?

Paid leave need not be a burden for business either. In California, the only state with paid family leave, the funding for paid leave comes from a small employee paycheck deduction, not out of the pocket of businesses.

Check out this story:

<http://www.momsrising.org/manifesto/chapter2>

My own brother and his wife are having their own problems. Problems, which would be alleviated if there existed, 12 months (hell even 6 months) of paid parental leave at either of their jobs. My sister-in-law is Post Partum and on medication, but she is working 40 hours a week and constantly has to take off from her job to pick up my sick niece from daycare. Sick because she goes to daycare where there is more abundance of germs than her own home, but she can't stay because going to daycare got her sick. Right now my sister-in-law is in fear of losing her job. She took the 3 months of maternity leave.

UNPAID maternity leave and they barely scrapped by (only with the help of a well-off grandmother supplementing their finances).

If she or my brother could take parental leave without fear of losing their 1 bedroom apartment and their car then my sister-in-law could take the time to go to therapy to treat her PPD, instead of relying strictly on drugs to sustain her sanity – she would have time to develop a bond with her daughter that she craves but is unable to form because she spends so little time with her and the extra time she does spend is because she had to leave work early to pick her daughter up from daycare (which means she's more stressed and unable to form a bond – which exacerbates her PPD). If my brother could take six months of parental leave (paid) then he could stay home with the baby for a while, they would not have to worry about so many doctors bills because she would not be going to daycare where she is getting so sick all the time. AND they wouldn't have to worry about the COST of daycare (I personally pay \$492 a month – care for infants/babies cost MORE).

Scaling back FMLA would cause more problems than currently exist. Expanding FMLA would alleviate situations like my brother and his wife are currently going through. Think about it.

Sincerely,

Rhiannon