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Dear members of the Pennsylvania House Labor & Industry Committee,

As a public interest organization that advocates for policies that support Pennsylvania families, we urge you to vote yes on Pennsylvania House Bill 200, legislation to establish a statewide paid family and medical leave program.

As you are surely aware, the United States is one of the few countries in the world that fails to guarantee paid leave for workers who have recently given birth or have other serious caretaking responsibilities. While some U.S. employers provide paid leave benefits, most do not.

Approximately 62% of Pennsylvania workers do not have access to paid leave benefits through their employer. Even *unpaid leave* under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act is inaccessible for 61% of Pennsylvanians.

Pennsylvania families are suffering under the strain of this lack of support as breadwinners are all too often forced to choose between employment and taking care of a family member. In Pennsylvania, 81 percent of Black mothers, 61 percent of Latina mothers, 49 percent of white mothers, and 40 percent of AAPI mothers are key family breadwinners, according to a 2024 analysis conducted by the National Partnership for Women and Families.

Our economy suffers, too. According to the same analysis, if women in Pennsylvania participated in the labor force at the same rate as women in countries with paid leave, there would be an estimated 107,000 additional workers in the state and \$3.7 billion more wages earned statewide.

The evidence is clear that a statewide paid leave program would support mothers, improve birth outcomes, help stabilize the workforce, and boost the capacity of Pennsylvania's businesses to recruit and retain talent and increase productivity and profitability.

Members of this Committee have expressed vigorous support for small businesses. We urge you to see advancing this bill as a reflection of that support. Statewide paid leave programs especially help small businesses by empowering them to stay competitive with corporations. Small business owners often want to do right by their employees but can't afford to offer the benefits that larger employers provide.

Currently, 13 states and the District of Columbia provide paid leave programs, which includes our neighboring states of New Jersey, New York, Delaware, and Maryland. This is critical context given Pennsylvania's declining population and the fact that families consider state policies when choosing where to live and work.

Impossible choices between work and family force employees, especially women (nearly half of Pennsylvania's labor force), out of their jobs. The resulting loss of income places many families in dire financial situations and contributes to the gender pay gap. Access to a paid leave program would allow talented employees to keep their jobs while caring for their families or their health, resulting in better financial stability for families and higher employee retention for employers. Furthermore, evidence has shown that those who had access to paid leave are more likely to earn raises and promotions following leave.

A statewide paid family and medical leave program is vital to the future of Pennsylvania's economic growth. We strongly urge you to support Pennsylvania's businesses, workforce, and economic competitiveness by passing a statewide paid family and medical leave program that benefits both families and employers across the Commonwealth.

We urge you to vote yes on House Bill 200 and advance this legislation to a full vote on the House floor.

Thank you,

Women's Law Project