



Washington Paid Leave

Findings from 30 one-on-one interviews
among business leaders throughout the
State of Washington

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Methodology – One-on-One Interviews

Lake Research Partners conducted 30 one-on-one interviews with men and women business owners in the state of Washington between August and October of 2016.

Participants were recruited to reflect a mix of business type, size, and geographical location and were screened to be:

- 11 interviews with small business owners
- 13 interviews with medium size business owners, HR decision makers/executives
- 6 interviews with large size business owners, HR decision makers/executives

- 17 interviews were conducted with business owners in the West of the state
- 13 interviews were conducted with business owners in the East of the state

The following findings use the term “employers” in reference to the participants of the 30 one-on-one interviews.

Qualitative Research Statement of Limitations

- In opinion research, the one-on-one interviews seek to develop insight and direction rather than quantitatively precise or absolute measures. Because of the limited number of respondents and the restrictions of recruiting, this research must be considered in a qualitative frame of reference.
- The reader may find that some of the information seems inconsistent in character upon first reading this report. These inconsistencies should be considered as valid data from the participant's point of view. That is, the participant may be misinformed or simply wrong in his or her knowledge or judgment, and we should interpret this as useful information about their level of understanding.
- This study cannot be considered reliable or valid in the statistical sense. This type of research is intended to provide knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and opinions about issues and concerns.

Qualitative Research Statement of Limitations

- The following limitations are inherent in qualitative research and are stated here to remind the reader that the qualitative data presented here cannot be projected to any universe of individuals.
 - Statement 1. Participants who respond to the invitation of a stranger to participate in this research show themselves to be risk takers and may be somewhat more assertive than non-participants.
 - Statement 2. Some participants speak more often and more forcefully in focus group sessions than other participants, so their opinions tend to carry more weight in the findings.
 - Statement 3. Participants “self-select” themselves.
 - Statement 4. Participants were not selected randomly; as a result each person in the pool of possible participants did not have an equal chance to be selected.

Key Findings



Key Findings: Employers in Washington

- Overall, employers in the state of Washington who participated in this research have a workforce that leans male, though a handful report having more women than men or about an even amount of both genders in their workforce.
- Though it is dependent on the make-up of their workforce and whether they hire seasonal employees, many employers say their staff works with them for many years.
- Regardless of business size, the average perceived age of employees in the State of Washington is between 30 and 50 years old.
- For employers, the most compelling reason to offer paid family and medical leave to employees is to give “peace of mind” and to ensure a plan is in place when a family crisis may arise. Some also note offering a benefit like this would bolster recruitment of future employees and would be good for employee morale.

Key Findings: Current Leave Practices

- Following current state and federal laws, employers of 50 or more employees in Washington provide family and medical leave that falls under the federal FMLA. Employers report following this law when an employee has a child. In addition to FMLA, employers also mention a Washington State Leave Act. Those who think they offer paid leave say it falls under their sick leave policy, the FMLA, or short-term disability, but it does not appear to be a separate family and medical leave program.
- Though the majority of employers say there is not a difference between men and women when implementing leave policies, some note the type of leave requested and the length of time taken varies between men and women.
- When an immediate family member, like a spouse, child, or parent has a serious illness, like cancer, a number of employers fall back on the coverage provided under FMLA to cover such events. Employers also depend on the coverage provided under FMLA to cover an employee who is seriously ill, in addition to sick leave policies, medical leave, and short-term disability. The specific family members that would qualify for leave are parents, siblings, grandparents, and children.
- When an employee takes leave, others within their department often step in to pick up their responsibility. Some employers hire temps for the duration of the person's leave as well.
- For employers in Washington who are not currently offering paid family or medical leave, the top reasons for doing so include their inability to afford the program and the fact that it is not a requirement by law. Small businesses say having the flexibility to handle leave on a case by case basis is important to them.
- When employers think about paid family and medical leave, they tend to think of sick leave, short-term disability, but not necessarily a separate paid program. Many employers feel they “take care of their employees” and determine pay on a case by case basis in order to keep good employees.

Key Findings: Reaction to Program

- Employers understand circumstances may arise within families or an employee's life that cannot be planned for, and a paid family and medical leave program provides their employees with a safety net and reassurances.
- Medium and large size businesses have positive reactions to the idea of a required paid family and medical leave program in the state of Washington, but small businesses are worried about how they could afford the implementation of such a program.
- However, some employers have mixed feelings about a program being mandated by the states – while they see the “good” in it, they worry about the costs, additional need for administration, and the threat of abuse by employees.
- For many, having the program include leave for employees when they have a serious illness/injury and maternity leave garners support. There is more mixed reactions to leave to care for a family member or paternity leave because they believe their employee should have other ways of covering income while on this type of leave.

Key Findings: Reactions to the Paid Family and Medical Leave Program

- The employers have mixed reactions after hearing that states like New York, California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island have all adopted programs that provide between 4-12 weeks of paid family leave and 26-52 weeks of medical leave financed through premiums paid by employees or a combination of employees and employers. For some, the length seems reasonable and they see value in having both parties contributing the program financially. Others worry about the 52-week upper limit of the medical leave program as unrealistic to cover.
- Some employers react negatively toward the program being required by the state. Beyond distrust of the government in general, employers see this as “forcing” a company who cannot afford it to implement the benefit.
- Employers in Washington split on whether or not those earning a minimum wage should receive a higher percentage of their wages while taking leave. Those who favor offering minimum wage employees a higher percentage of their wages while on leave understand someone earning minimum wage in Washington already struggle to afford basic things while those against point out how that would be “unfair” to those who earn more than the minimum wage. They want it to be equal across all employees in the state.
- For wage replacement, employees would receive some portion of their normal salary during a family leave period. In response to this, employers think the proportion of salaries the employee would receive sound reasonable and appreciate the upper limits implemented in the other states.
- Job security is a critical component of the program.

Key Findings: Reactions to Funding Options

- Employers' reactions to the cost estimated for a paid family and medical leave program – between two and three dollars per week per Washington worker – range from some thinking it is too low to cover all the benefits, some thinking it is about right and manageable, and others thinking there would be pushback from their employees for the high costs per paycheck.
- Most employers favor payroll taxes split equally by the employees and employers as the means by which this program should be funded. Those in favor of a split like that the employees are invested in the program and the burden is not entirely on the employer.
- If there was a tax credit for small businesses, employers of small and medium size businesses think it would be “fantastic” and “a good thing.” If the tax credit were enough to cover a significant amount of the costs, it would be encouraging to employers who feel this program would be forced on them.

Key Findings: Impacts of a Paid Family and Medical Leave Program

- Some employers anticipate the implementation of a paid family and medical leave program affecting how they operate – from hiring practices to budgeting. Others do not believe it will have any significant impact on how they operate.
- However, they foresee the program impacting their employees both positively and negatively. While it may provide peace of mind to their employees, the employers are concerned their employees will become disgruntled when they see an additional payroll tax.
- For employers, the most compelling reason to offer paid family and medical leave to employees is to give “peace of mind” and to ensure a plan is in place when a family crisis may arise. Some also note offering a benefit like this would bolster recruitment of future employees and would be good for employee morale.

Among those who are currently providing benefits to their employees, paid holidays, sick leave, vacation time, medical, and maternity leave are the most common benefits covered. In some cases, the catchall “Paid Time Off” applies to their workforce.

“We offer paid holidays, sick leave, and vacation. Everyone is eligible for holidays if they work at least 20 hours a week. Part-time employees, those under 20 hours a week, they have to work at least a year before they accrue vacation or sick leave.” –Large Business, East

“There is medical, dental, vision, we have sick leave, we have maternity leave, and I think that’s it.” –Medium Business, West

“Okay, we have vacation, paid vacation, we have eight company paid holidays (that includes seven for their holidays and the employee gets their birthday off also and they get paid for it), paid sick leave that accrues up to 304 hours, they get up to three days bereavement when they have one of those immediate family members (parents, grandparents, siblings, sons and daughters), and we have paid jury duty leave also.” – Medium Business, East

“We do get a week of paid vacation. Everybody that is full-time is eligible.” – Small Business, East

“We have lumped everything into what we call Personal Time Off or PTO time, so your vacation, bereavement leave, whether you are sick, or day off. I mean that all comes under the PTO policy. They are after one year of employment for it to be paid.” – Medium Business, West

“With paid leave, they get vacation and personal time off. It’s all included what we call PTO, which is Personal Time Off. That’s vacation, sick time, and that sort of stuff that are paid. All of them are eligible after their first year of service.” – Medium Business, East

“Holiday. I think there are 10 holidays and then 2 weeks of paid vacation, but that increases every year you know depending on how many years they have been with me.” – Small Business, West

“All of our full-time employees are eligible for paid leave benefits. Our exempt employees earn a little bit higher rates of general leave than our non-exempt employees, and then we have a bargaining unit and we negotiate their benefits.” – Large Business, East

“So we have our paid leave which is basically for full-time people and you can accrue 3.08 hours per pay period for vacation time and you accrue 1.85 hours of sick time per pay period. All employees are eligible if they are at 30 hours or above. Part-time employees can start accruing after a year.” – Large Business, West

- In all cases, full-time employees are eligible to take this leave. In some instances, the amount of time allowed correlates with the length of time the employee has been with the company.

Employers who think they offer paid leave say it falls under their sick leave policy, the FMLA, or short-term disability, but it does not appear to be a separate family and medical leave program.

Yes, Provide Paid Leave

“Under the sick leave policy, yes, we do. It is lumped together with the sick leave policy.” – Medium Business, East

“Yes through the FMLA and short-term disability.” – Medium Business, East

“Well everybody gets a lot of time off. You know I think I have three or four weeks a year or something and that’s just what I think everybody should have – you know at least a month a year if not more.” – Small Business, West

“We do in a sense that we draw down sick leave, their existing balance on sick leave and vacation. But we don’t provide paid leave outside that structure.” – Large Business, East

“Yeah, because we have the sick leave policy. It’s kind of informal. It is sort of as needed. But I have never had anybody have a need for more than what their own sick leave allows for, probably because we tend not to be very sick, so people rarely use any sick leave, but there are things that come up with families.” – Small Business, West

No, Do Not Provide Paid Leave

“We do not.” – Medium Business, East

“No.” – Small Business, East

“No.” – Medium Business, East

*“Basically, on FMLA if they are on FMLA, they have to use their sick and vacation time, but **no, we don’t offer separate leave.**”* – Large Business, West

“We don’t. We would if it were required by law, obviously, but since it hasn’t come up...I am not sure if Washington has a Paid Family Leave Act, but I mean if it did, we would have to comply. We have never researched it.” – Small Business, West

“Yeah, it’s actually a case-by-case basis, but for the most part, we don’t provide any paid leave other than what you have of your PTO.” – Medium Business, West

“Nope, nothing other than what they would have contributed in terms of their employment here. They can bank the PTO and they can bank vacation time. We pay them out if they don’t elect to take the time off.” – Small Business, West

Following state and federal laws, employers of 50 and more employees in the State of Washington provide FMLA leave to their employees when they have a child.

*"You know I have been here 38 years and let me tell you we have had a lot of employees and moms and dads that have had kids in this company. **We allow our...and this goes along with Washington State's leave law also and FMLA...but we allow them to use any accrued sick leave, both mother and father can use their accrued sick leave for paid,** and then of course we give them up to 12 weeks FMLA leave if they choose to."* – Medium Business, East

*"And I have only been here a little over a month now, but I actually had one of our gals that runs the front just went on maternity leave at the beginning of the month and so **we are just following the FMLA – the 12 weeks unpaid – and her position will still be here when she comes back after those 12 weeks.**"* – Medium Business, East

*"Well we stay in communication with them. **We are above 50 and so we participate in the Family Medical Leave Act.** We retain the person's position for the required length of time, and then if they are desiring to come back, we have a position available for them when they come back."* – Medium Business, East

"Well if they qualify for Family Medical Leave of course they are protected and they get the 12 weeks off and that sort of thing. If they do not qualify for it, then depending on the doctor's...the state of Washington requires either 6 or 8 weeks, depending on what the doctor wants." – Medium Business, West

*"Typically, **we provide family medical leave since we are an employer with over 50 employees. They can take whatever sick and vacation time they have available to them,** but we do not currently have a short-term disability program for them to tap into."* – Medium Business, West

*"Well certainly **they have rights under the FMLA and the Washington Family Leave Act.** We certainly want them to take the time that they need to have their child and bond with their child and we just allow them the time that they need."* – Large Business, East

*"**They get maternity leave, the females. The women get maternity leave for three months.** It is actually six weeks, but you could take up to three months without losing your medical benefits. And it is paid."* – Medium Business, West

- The employers report having a clear understanding of and following federal FMLA laws when an employee has a child. A handful volunteer the stipulation of 12 weeks unpaid leave that is covered under the law.
- In addition to the federal FMLA, employers also mention Washington State's Leave Act.

Some employers, including small businesses, also allow their employees to tap into paid vacation and sick time, or have other policies in place for employees with children.

*“So we give a pretty generous vacation policy depending on how long someone has been with me, so of course **they have their vacation and their sick leave and then six months of unpaid family leave.**”* – Small Business, West

*“We have done it several different ways. Obviously, there is FMLA leave for the period immediately after delivery, and actually in this state that includes any pregnancy related disability prior to delivery. **We have an infant at work policy where we allow people to bring newborns into the office for up to six months. In the past, we have allowed people to job share and we have allowed people to work from home.**”* –Large Business, East

“We actually work with them being pregnant as far as when they have the appointments and when they need to go and we do schedule work around that area. We also, depending on how long they want to take off to be with the baby, adapt to that as well.” – Medium Business, East

- Additional policies employees are offered include tapping into their vacation and sick time, the ability to bring their newborns to work, and job sharing.

While the majority report there is no difference if their employee adopts, some note a difference in policy and procedure.

*“Yes, there is a difference. **As much as you want to make it the same, if somebody that adopted wanted time off for instance, which I know this is what this is about, then they could have it.** They would be entitled, in our opinion, for whatever they want and because we are a privately-owned company we are pretty free about you know hey if you want time off you want time off. We are pretty easygoing with our employees. That’s one of our selling points for new employees is that we are pretty able to or flexible enough to give people off time that they want to have off.”* – Medium Business, West

*“**I think it would depend on the age of the adopted child. If it was a 10-year-old adopted child, I would see it differently than a newborn infant.** Because there is quite a bit of stress on the business to hold a job for a person for that length of time.”* – Small Business, West

*“**To be honest, I think it would depend upon the age of the child, but I would think if it was a newborn or something that needs that kind of support and you need that nurturing, I don’t see a difference. And at the same time, if you adopt a four- or five-year-old, you would want them to somehow or another have an opportunity to get into the household I would think and that should require the parents to be able to take time off.** Now, what that time off is, I have never thought about that question. So is it four months or is it a month? I know I trust people personally, which is crazy, but I would kind of leave it up to them.”* – Small Business, East

*“We do not, as far as time, there isn’t. **We currently don’t have any adoption benefits.** There isn’t any kind of cost sharing for adoption costs.”* – Large Business, West

While the majority of employers say there are no differences from the implementation of leave between men and women, they note the type of leave taken and length of time differs between mothers and fathers.

“Yes, generally, the woman employee tends to request more time off than the male counterpart.” – Small Business, West

*“We have the same regulations that everyone else has and **we would allow the man/father to take that bonding time certainly or time off to take care of the mother of his child if there is extenuating circumstances.**” – Large Business, East*

*“No. No, we don’t. We can’t and we don’t discriminate. We used to years ago when the law allowed it, but you can’t discriminate, so **we apply it both to men and women, mothers and fathers.**” – Medium Business, East*

*“**The only one that I have found is that the women tend to apply for that time off more than men.** In fact, I just had one last week and I told him he is eligible and he goes oh I don’t need it, my wife is doing it.” – Medium Business, West*

*“Yes. You mean as far as the time off that they can take? Well with the mother it is usually based on when the doctor can release them to come back to work for childbirth reasons. **For men, they have the full amount that they can take and they can also take sick and vacation leave, but we don’t require a doctor’s note, obviously, for them.**” – Medium Business, West*

*“No, there is a big difference because there is not as many...I mean sometimes, but not always, with the doctor’s appointments the men don’t go to all of them, but of course if the woman is pregnant she does, so you know it depends. So there is a big difference. **There is a difference in the amount of time they wish to take off and if they have to deal with bed rest or sickness or anything like that.**” – Medium Business, West*

*“Not in the way that we view it. Obviously, he is not going to request time off for childbirth. But beyond that, no, **we treat it the same way.**” – Large Business, East*

*“No, they can. **They [men] can take two weeks. But I don’t think it is paid.**” – Medium Business, West*

- Some of the differences include whether the leave is paid or unpaid, the length of time applied for, or whether they apply at all for the leave.

When an immediate family member, like a spouse, child, or parent has a serious illness, like cancer, a number of employers fall back on the coverage provided under FMLA to cover such events.

“We currently have a list that qualifies and that would be parents, it would be siblings, it would be grandparents, and children. If it’s outside like an uncle or an aunt or something like that, no we don’t. They can choose to take time off. Absolutely. It’s just unpaid. It’s just unpaid. Yeah. So I am specifically talking about a way to have paid leave on that.” – Medium Business, East

“They can take their sick and vacation time, but they wouldn’t qualify for family medical leave unless it was one of those qualifying...if it was an immediate family member that, then they wouldn’t be eligible for family medical leave. They all qualify.” – Medium Business, West

“If they qualify, again, and they are a primary caregiver, they qualify for the 12 weeks off. With a family illness in the state of Washington, again, they would have to make sure that they are eligible for it, and what we found is most of the time it ends up being what we call more of an intermittent leave than full weeks at a time.” – Medium Business, West

“We allow them that 12 weeks that they are entitled to under FMLA, or depending if the Washington Family Act falls into play.” – Large Business, East

“Well you know they have a certain amount of time off for sick leaves and stuff like that, so I give various amounts of days. They can use their sick days for something like that.” – Small Business, West

“I haven’t had to face that unfortunately crisis yet. And I am working on rewriting our Employee Handbook to cover things like that, but I know that is something that we would kind of just assess case by case and you know work with the individual to try and suit their needs so that they can do what they need to do to help those immediate family members.” – Medium Business, East

“Well what does happen is they can request time off and – provided that they qualify – they will start FMLA and we give them the opportunity to have that job protected while they are caring for their family member.” – Large Business, West

- Currently, employers are offering unpaid leave options to their employees, as well as the ability to tap into their sick and vacation time.
- The employers also note the specific family members that would qualify for such leave: parents, siblings, grandparents, children – “immediate” family members.

When an employee is seriously ill, employers again fall back on FMLA. Sick leave policies, medical leave, and short-term disability are also policies employers say their employees can use.

*“That would be something they would probably do the **Medical Leave** for.” – Small Business, West*

*“**We have a sick leave policy** that allows them to use that time, any accrued sick leave time for that. And the same thing with FMLA, **they can have up to 12 weeks**. You know the sick leave policy allows, ours maxes out at 304 hours, seven and a half weeks I think it is of paid leave if they choose to use that.” – Medium Business, East*

*“**We are covered under FMLA** and so that’s our first approach and then we do our best to accommodate their return.” – Large Business, East*

*“**They are protected under the Family Medical Leave and the Washington Family Medical Leave** as well for that period of time.” – Medium Business, West*

*“**We have long-term care insurance** that we make available to all our staff members. Some of them have used it in the past and some are currently using it right now. And **we have made accommodations for people who are sick and are not able to fulfill the full requirements of the job until that illness has been recovered**. We had one employee who was sick for approximately a year and a quarter and it took about that long for them to recover, and so I think we have been fairly proactive in assisting our employees through difficult situations such as a serious illness.” – Medium Business, East*

*“**Short-term disability**.” – Large Business, West*

*“**You go on a medical leave**. It could be an indefinite leave, but it would still be unpaid.” – Medium Business, West*

*“We have actually had that happen a number of times as well in the 32 years that I have been here and **we are very flexible**. We have an employee right now that is going through chemo and he is working from home whatever hours he can and we are still paying his full-time wage because he a long-term employee and we value that.” – Medium Business, West*

- Other employers note insurance policies that can be used, including long-term care insurance.
- Employers say they are willing to accommodate their employee’s needs as the situations occur, within reason. This includes shared leave where other employees donate time toward that individuals leave, working remotely from home, and adjusted schedules.

For employers in Washington who are not currently offering paid family or medical leave, the top reasons for doing so include their inability to afford the program and the fact that it is not a requirement by law.

“The cost of providing that full-time benefit.” – Small Business, West

“Well it’s not a requirement and probably is the main reason.” – Medium Business, East

“We can’t afford it right now. We are just barely making it. We are trying to build up though. Hopefully, someday that will be something that we could afford to do, but at this point we cannot afford it.” – Small Business, West

“The cost associated with it. After being forced – being a small business – having to provide health insurance, there is no way right now that I can do it unless I increase my rates to my customers significantly and in the population, especially with my caregivers, I mean there is somebody getting pregnant every month so it would just not be cost-effective.” – Medium Business, East

“Money. We don’t earn enough to pay for someone to not be here when we have to pay for other people to cover their job.” – Small Business, East

“The cash flow. Like I said, we are a growing company. We are fairly small. Fairly small compared to other corporations and businesses and the cash flow is what is preventing from us providing a lot of things. We did consider giving full medical benefits, but it is very expensive and it will put us in the hole for us to actually provide that and pay payroll.” – Medium Business, East

“The cost.” – Medium Business, West

“If we paid less taxes it would be helpful.” – Small Business, East

The length of leave taken by employees varies widely, and tends to be determined on a case by case basis.

“I’d say on average people will generally use about two weeks of their PTO. Again, we are open to whatever amount of leave they want to take if we can work it out, but again, their paid leave is only based on how much they have accrued.”—Medium Business, West

“In our situation, we haven’t really had any long ones. It’s like four days maximum. I think we have one that is coming up that is going to be a week because one of my assistant’s spouse is having surgery, so she is going to take a week off and that will be a paid week off.”—Small Business, West

“You know probably a week to 10 days would be about the limit of any kind of paid type of absence.”—Small Business, West

“Following FMLA, yes, up to 12 weeks if it qualifies. And that depends how long the person has been with the company because they have to be here for 12 months before they qualify for FMLA.”—Medium Business, East

“I have mothers that have wanted to take up to 12 weeks and didn’t have that much paid leave coming and so they just got paid for whatever they had and took the rest off without pay. And we have had a couple of new mothers that wanted to take longer than that and we are okay with that too. I mean, obviously, we couldn’t be indefinite with holding the job, but generally, like I said, we are pretty permissible and open with working with employees.”—Medium Business, West

“Up to six months. You know it just really depends upon the circumstance.”—Medium Business, East

“Under the Family Medical Leave, they are eligible for up to 12 weeks of family medical leave, which if they have accrued general leave it would be paid.”—Large Business, East

“It depends on how long they have been with us and how much of their paid leave they have used for the purposes. So we roll over sick leave from year to year. We allow employees to accumulate up to 12 weeks worth... If somebody hasn’t been here very long, it can be a big issue, or if they have been using their sick leave as they earn it, then it can be a big issue for them as well.”—Large Business, East

- The length of leave taken correlates directly with the scenario they are facing. While some employees take a maximum of four days of leave, others take weeks or months of leave at a time.
- The longest amount of leave offered by the employers was six months.

Though some employees are allowed to donate time to an employee's time off for a major family event, most employers say it is not allowed.

"They do." – Medium Business, East

"Nope. And the reason being is Washington State laws really make it difficult. We looked into that three or four years ago through our employer association that we belong to and boy they laid out all of the Washington laws. And this is where taxes come into play. You have unemployment taxes, you have workman's comp taxes, and you know in one of those salary has something to do with it and the other one is hours. So the "hours" one really isn't a big deal, but you know the state of Washington doesn't want to lose any revenue. If they have let's say somebody making 10 bucks an hour versus 15 bucks an hour, well on the higher one they are going to get more unemployment taxes. That's the deal with that and so they don't want to have somebody give time away and get lower taxes. So they just make it very difficult. We have had lots...not a lot...we have some employees ask to do that and we just say we can't allow it. It's the Washington State law. It's too cumbersome. So we would like that if it was easier. I mean I wish it was easier to do, but the regulations are just too cumbersome." – Medium Business, East

"You know we have actually had employees volunteer, but whenever we have had a really sticky situation where we know that someone may have the only income in their family and they have a long-term illness or something, generally the ownership of the company just says no, thank you for that, keep your sick leave and we are going to step in and take care of this." – Medium Business, West

"You know that's interesting. I have never seen it done in this organization, so at this point, I would say no, but it has never come up either." – Medium Business, West

"Not that I have seen or know of." – Large Business, West

"No. Nope, no shared leave program." – Medium Business, East

Among employers who provide unpaid leave to their employees, FMLA determines the leave that is covered.

*“In the event that something like that happened, we would definitely not fire them. **We would give them their time that they need, but it would be unpaid, yes, unless they have vacation or sick days.** We do offer vacation and sick days.” – Small Business, West*

*“We would. We certainly would. Yeah, absolutely. And **we guarantee a person’s position if they wanted to leave and have a baby or care for a sick person or a family member or maybe themselves.**” – Small Business, West*

“If it falls under the FMLA, then yes we would.” – Medium Business, East

“Yes. Okay, that would be in the situation of say you have an individual that is pregnant, but she has not been here a year to qualify for Family Medical Leave, but is due to be off and if the doctor, under the Washington Leave, wants her off say eight weeks, then she is off eight weeks due to a doctor’s certification, but it is unpaid. She wouldn’t even have the PTO time.” – Medium Business, West

*“Yes. **It depends on whether it is an FMLA situation, or if it’s a non-FMLA situation, we have to base it based on the position and the requirements and all of that, so I can’t fully answer that question.**” – Medium Business, West*

“Yes...If say I have exhausted all of my vacation time, my personal time, or my floating holidays and I still need a day off to tend to a situation, whether that is my car is sick and got to go get it fixed or if I need to go fishing, I can put in for a personal leave day.” – Medium Business, East

*“**We do provide unpaid leave, yes.**” – Large Business, West*

- Employers say they provide their employees with the time they need. If it is beyond vacation and sick time, this time would be unpaid.

The length of unpaid leave taken by employees is similar to the length of unpaid leave covered by FMLA.

“Up to six months. You know it just really depends upon the circumstances.”—Medium Business, East

“Usually, it is just short, a week or two. We are pretty good about trying to keep everybody in a job and trying to keep everybody here and we try to work with them. Like when I was injured – that’s the easiest one for me to refer to – I would come in a couple of times a week for an hour and do a few things, but then the rest of the time I was gone. It is just do what you can and try to stay connected and take as much time as you need.” – Small Business, East

“I would say...just like right now with my one gal that just had her baby, like she is going to be out for 12 weeks and we have had a dishwasher that got injured at his other job and so he was out for a few days, but he had a doctor’s note. So it just really varies and we stick by whatever...like when they come back with a doctor’s note, like we stick to that very firmly. Of course, we want them here, but they need to take that time off.” – Medium Business, East

“It depends on what they have available for the sick and vacation balance.” – Medium Business, West

“Every person is different. We have people that have taken three weeks, two weeks, and we have people that have taken two months or three months. It’s a case by case scenario.” – Medium Business, East

- Again, it often depends on the circumstances and reasons for leave to determine the length of time being taken by employees.
- Employers report depending on doctor’s notes and what the employee has accrued as sick and vacation time to determine how long they will allow leave.

If someone does take leave from work, more often than not their job will be held for them and will be there when they return. However, some employers note that it depends on the length of leave being taken to determine whether the position can be held for them upon their return.

“It depends on the duration of their leave.” – Medium Business, West

*“Well we would have to hire somebody else right away because with only six people there is only so much...but we would probably just hire like a temp depending on who it was. If it was my carpenter that went out, I would have to hire a new carpenter at his level. But he would definitely be able to...I mean we are trying to expand our business anyway and so we would definitely have them come back. Like I said, everybody that works here has been here forever, except me, but my dad owns the company and so I am not going anywhere either. Like **I can’t imagine that we would just not let somebody come back. We are a really tight group.**”* – Small Business, West

“We have never had anybody that has lost their job by doing that, so usually their job is still there when they are ready to come back.” – Medium Business, East

“We have not come up to a point where it would be your job is not going to be here anymore. We’ve always held the job.” – Small Business, East

*“If it’s someone that we hired for like the summer season and something happened, it is not something that we could...if the leave was to come back after the peak season...because we are going to be having to do layoffs...it could not be there. But I’d say **for the most part, like we are pretty good at making sure everyone’s jobs are still here when they get back.**”* – Medium Business, East

“What we do is we go by the law and it is protected for that period of time that they are off according to the Washington State and the Federal Leave.” – Medium Business, West

*“It depends entirely on the position and whether we have coverage for that position. **No coverage, then it makes it very difficult. We will farm work out if we have to, but that’s a short-term situation.**”* – Small Business, West

“Yeah, more than likely. It also would depend on the job they were doing. They would probably have a job, but it wouldn’t necessarily be the same job. I mean we would try to keep it for them, but there are certain aspects of the car business that you just can’t stop.” – Medium Business, West

“Well FMLA is job protected leave, so yeah, we would have to guarantee that they would have a job when they return. Yeah, I mean we would have to guarantee that that job was there.” – Large Business, West

- Whether their job is still there may also depend on the type of job the person taking leave was doing for the company.
- While they may have a job when they return from leave, it may be a different role within the company.

Employers perceive that when an employee takes leave from work, the other employees are impacted by their absences. Overall, other employees tend to share the responsibility and step up to fill in the void, but for some small businesses the absence of one employee can negatively impact their profits and ability to do the work.

*"It depends on how vital their knowledge is to the job. Some of them will help like talk another person through what they need to do. **There is a lot of telecommuting if they can.**"* – Small Business, East

*"Well up here it is kind of a unique situation because we are up in the mountains and **everyone is just kind of under the understanding that we all pitch in where we can.** And I think for a situation like that, and especially up here (even the short time I have been here) you get close to these people. **They would want to do whatever they could to help for that person since they are not here.**"* – Medium Business, East

*"**If an employee went out for an extended period of time or a long time, we may – especially technicians – need to try to find someone else.** Unfortunately, in our industry right now, finding automotive technicians is very, very, very, very difficult to find. **For an example, it can impact the business where it took us three months to find a technician to replace them and so we lost all that income. I mean we have gone non-profitable and losing money for a year because of that.**"* – Small Business, West

*"Well depending on the position obviously, but if someone is going to be out on extended leave, then yeah, **you are going to have people that pick up the slack.** You know we have...well this is a workman's comp claim, but we have a salesman that is out right now and my sales manager is doing his calls and he has got plenty to do, but that's what happens. The other employees have to pick up the slack. The work doesn't stop." – Medium Business, East*

*"**Other employees in that department end up...it's more like a job share type situation.** I have had one situation to where **they did bring in a person to fill in on a part-time basis,** and I say part-time because it was only the duration of the time that the person was out." – Medium Business, West*

*"Yeah, it depends upon the position that the person is vacating for a while for the leave and it depends upon the position they are in. **It could get absorbed; it could get backfilled, we could cover with overtime.**"* – Medium Business, East

*"Of course, **there is additional stress on the rest of the team because you have somebody out and the work still has to be done. Most people are very understanding about it.** We have had occasions where other employees have donated sick leave to someone who doesn't have enough to cover their absence. We do our best to shuffle things. Our managers will step in and work the frontlines to the extent that we need to." – Large Business, East*

*"Well other people would have to share the load of that particular person, and some of the departments are larger and some are smaller. **It's a little easier in a larger department than it sometimes is in a smaller department to be able to shoulder the load.**"* – Small Business, West

Reactions to the Paid Family and Medical Leave Program

There is an active conversation in Washington state about requiring a paid family and medical leave program to provide paid leave to employees for circumstances that may arise within their families.



Medium, large, and one small business shared positive reactions to the idea of a required paid family and medical leave program in the state of Washington.

"I think it should be done. There would probably be costs associated with it. It is something that I would vote for.

*As a person that runs a company, if there is legislation, there is legislation, and it is what it is. You know the part that I will go back to in our earlier conversation is **there are so many particulars of why the leave is needed so to speak and then durations and then do you cap it and that just seems ungodly to do something like that.** I would go with a public vote myself. I think those are the people affected."* – Small Business, West

***"I think it's a great idea because you can't really plan.* You know family emergencies, you know it comes when you least expect it and to know that you still are going to get paid while you are trying to care for your immediate family member, I think that's a huge reassurance. You know it's something I think about like with my parents getting older and being able to take care of them, but you have to still work and make money. **You know it's nice now that we have at the 12 weeks of unpaid and so I know that my job will be there when I am able to come back, but to have some kind of money coming to you, I know that would be something that I would be supportive of.**" – Medium Business, East**

"I knew it was happening and I think it is good. It is a burden on the small businesses though. But I think it is good that people have the ability to take care of what they need to take care of." – Large Business, West

"It isn't a burden in California or New Jersey and I think that that's what we are finding here is the burden tends to come from not the idea of it, but the administration of it. I mean seriously it's the administration. So it is what gets written in the ordinance or what gets written into the law that becomes burdensome in some of these different ordinances that states come up. And so it's not the idea of it; it's how it is implemented and to the extent that Washington could take a cue from California and New Jersey, which I am sure smart people are looking at other states that have these things and then that certainly would be something we would be used to and don't seem to be having too many or any issues with." – Large Business, West

"I am torn. On the one hand, I think it's the right thing providing paid leave. We like to give a lot of lip service to families, but not a lot of actual support on the ground and this would be a big piece of that, but my hesitation is knowing the finances of this company as I do and being intimately acquainted with the marketplace, it's just one more thing that we would need to finance and to fund." – Large Business, East

"One of our co-chairs of the company is very passionate in this regard and so we would support that being countrywide, worldwide, and statewide for sure. I think we would support broader, if it is necessary, legislation in order to ensure that people have financial or a lack of financial concern while they are trying to recover from an illness or assisting someone else. There is a great need for that." – Large Business, West

- The employers understand circumstances arise that cannot be planned for, and this program would provide their employee with reassurances.
- However, some employers have mixed feelings where they think the program would be "good" but worry about the costs and administration burdens that may come with it.

Employers, particularly those of small businesses, are worried about how they could afford the implementation of such a program.

*"I guess I am against it. **As a small business owner, there's too many costs involved.** You know if I get sick, nobody takes care of me. I have to take care of myself. I feel my employees...I pay my employees well enough that they should be able to take care of themselves in those situations."* – Small Business, East

*"In our organization, **given everything we've got given to them, I am against a paid leave program.**"* – Medium Business, East

*"Oh, I think that's nice. It just has to come from somewhere. **Who is going to pay for it is my question.** Somebody has to pay for all of these benefits, and whether the state of Washington does through our taxes or whether we do through our ability to maintain profits and provide that kind of an opportunity for employees, somebody has to pay for it."* – Small Business, West

*"**As an employee, I think that's a wonderful idea, but as the office manager and bookkeeper, I think that's a horrible idea. That would be a financial burden on our company.** Seriously, like we are barely making it now as it is. But yeah, there are times that I stress out about if I am even going to make payroll. As an employee, I think it would fantastic because then I wouldn't have to worry because I do worry about that as an employee."* – Small Business, West

*"Oh, if it comes along, we would have to comply with it. But you know I don't know. It's kind of the same thing. **I mean you really would like to help your employees, but then on the other hand a small company can't necessarily afford it.**"* – Medium Business, West

*"Well I worry, again, because of the money. **As an employee, it would be great, but as someone who has to write the checks and figure out where to cover everything, it makes me very nervous because I don't know if we would be able to handle that.** And if we are forced to do something like that, we might not be able to stay in business. Because we are not a higher-end company. We don't have a lot of extra money to throw around."* – Small Business, East

Also of concern to employers is the abuse by employees that they believe will happen. Trying to ascertain whether an employee has a valid reason to take paid leave and not simply taking advantage of the benefit is a concern for the medium and larger businesses in Washington.

"I think just the amount of the duration if people tend to, like I said, learn how to manipulate where they have resources that could help them get back to work or work part-time instead of you know just taking those benefits and making reasons that they can get those benefits. That would be my biggest concern." – Small Business, West

*"I don't know what I think. I think it would depend upon the situation. **I feel like there are some places where it would be warranted and I also feel like there are some instances where it could be really taken advantage of.**"* – Large Business, West

*"I think it would be not a good idea because **I could see where it would be abused if people know that they can take time off like that and get paid for it.** That's to me what voluntary short-term disability is for."* – Medium Business, East

"I think there is an incentive for somebody to be able to play the system." – Small Business, West

*"I think **my personal biggest concern would be having to ascertain whether someone is really, truly eligible and you know wondering if people would be taking advantage of the program.**"* – Medium Business, West

"I believe the abuse that I could see with employees." – Medium Business, East

"Abuse." – Medium Business, West

*"**I mean there's people out there who will abuse anything they can.** You know they will take the leave and not really need it or exaggerate the situation so that they could take it and be off and still get paid."* – Medium Business, West

*"**I think we live in a culture that's already very entitled and I feel like we'd be feeding that.** I am not being opposed to being able to help people stay at home with their kids. I mean I was a stay-at-home mom. And so I can totally understand why a mom wants to do that, but like for us, we offer FMLA, which is a federal program. They can take their vacation and sick time while they are on that. We have short-term disability that can kick in after they have exhausted that, which is something that they opt for. I have a really hard time with the idea that if we are going to mandate it that you know you my 40- and 50- and 60-year-old employees are now forced to pay taxes or to pay premiums toward a program that doesn't affect them. I guess those are some of my big issues, but at the same time, I don't want to be dispassionate either because you know some people do need that benefit. I am torn about it."* – Large Business, West

Some employers react negatively toward the program being required by the state. Beyond distrust of the government in general, employers see this as “forcing” a company who cannot afford it to implement the benefit.

*“The issue I have is forcing a company to do that as a benefit. **I am not saying it is not a good idea. There are some companies that probably can’t afford it, especially smaller companies.** You only have a handful of employees and if you have one person that is gone, I mean you have 15% to 25% of your workforce gone if you only have 3 or 4 or 5 people. Where you have us, we can usually pick up the slack. That’s why we have a policy like that. And again, the length of time. How many paid days? You know that’s a concern too.”* – Medium Business, East

“You know I think the less government involvement the better. I think good business practice warrants that thing, but I think it should be the decision-making at the employer’s discretion. I don’t think it should be something that is required by the government, but I think if an employer is doing the right job or doing a good job, they will have some kind of – to the extent that they can – assistance in taking care of their employees’ needs to the best they can. The concept I am not opposed to. I just don’t think the government should be requiring or directing it.” – Medium Business, East

*“I don’t think it should be required. I mean I guess I would have to know all the stipulations like...I mean **I don’t think a company should be told if someone has worked here for two months and then has to go out on a six-month leave for an illness or something that they should have to pay or any kind of amount of time.** I think that that should be up to the company’s discretion. And like a company in our case, if we have a long-term employee, we are generally going to help that person out...I think that could cause all kinds of issues.”* – Medium Business, West

“Well I am not the biggest fan of you know government to begin with. You know they are not going to pay, so somewhere along the lines taxpayers are going to foot the bill for everything, which is okay, but at the same token, we already pay a ton of taxes and they keep taking more and more and more and we actually get less and less and less.” – Small Business, West

“You might expect that I would support it...I don’t support mandatory because I think...I mean I think one of the benefits that a business can offer people is a certain amount of flexibility, and if businesses choose not to offer that, then they won’t get the top quality employees. I really truly feel...I don’t know that I believe that the state should be able to mandate how a business operates any further than people have safe and healthy working conditions. So despite...I know you have just heard that I do offer all of that, but on the other hand that’s what I consider to be one of the benefits of working for my office versus some other office.” – Small Business, West

The employers have **mixed reactions** after hearing that different states, have adopted programs and provide between 4-12 weeks of paid family leave and 26-52 weeks of medical leave. For some employers, the general length of time being offered seems laudable or reasonable.

“Well the timeframe in itself sounds pretty fairly reasonable. I don’t know necessarily about the leave one, but for medical purposes...like we are all getting older here and god forbid somebody should get like cancer or you know some kind of severe lung disease and recovery time can be significant. So the medical one, that doesn’t sound too unreasonable to me.” – Small Business, West

“I think it sounds good, and when both parties are putting something into it then I feel like there is more value to it, especially for the employees. And again, just knowing that you have that there for when those unexpected life situations come up, you know you have that there for you.” – Medium Business, East

“That’s fine. I like that kind of set up. It sounds like to me what you are describing is the system that is already in play for unemployment insurance, which means that there is a premium paid by both me and my employee, and then if someone needs to use that, it comes out of a pool of some kind rather than me just absorbing 90 days of pay for someone who is not there. That approach sounds reasonable.” – Small Business, West

“I think that is fair. I think those are okay time ranges.” – Medium Business, East

“So it’s kind of like an emergency savings fund basically and if that was used to pay out the employee, I would be okay with that. I mean I don’t think we would have a problem doing that at all.” – Small Business, East

“I would say that...again, I am certain that those would have certain requirements built in, but again, we would be fully supportive of whatever is the necessary timeframe for the issue to be resolved and someone to be returned to work capable of focusing on their work.” – Large Business, West

Different states have adopted programs, including New York, California, New Jersey and Rhode Island. These states provide between 4 and 12 weeks of paid family leave and 26 – 52 weeks of medical leave depending on the type of leave they offer. In most of these, benefits are financed through payroll premiums, paid by employees, or a combination of employees and employers, varying from state to state.

- Some employers see value in a system where both parties are financially supporting the program.

For employers of all sizes, even if they approve of the 4-12 weeks of paid family leave, the medical leave range – particularly the upper limit of 52 weeks seen in other states – is “excessive” and “too much time off.”

“It seems kind of long. It’s not...like here what I tell my employees is pregnancy is not a handicap and you know if they want to have a family, then that’s just part of the process to take time off if they want to stay home with their child.” – Medium Business, East

“Well 26 weeks...if somebody takes 26 weeks off and they are a very important employee, what do you do in that time? What do you do to fill in for them?” – Small Business, East

“I think the family leave sounds fine. I think the 26 to 52 weeks seems a bit extensive to me. It is excessive, but to me it would just depend on what it was and if it could be abused honestly. If you had cancer you know and then you need a year off, then...” – Medium Business, West

“Well medical leave, you know 52 weeks is a long time to pay for somebody. I mean they also need to have some coverage. So timeframe to me I think needs to be dependent on the choice of the employee. Whether an employee or an employer maybe matches or contributes based on the percentage of whatever to match the employee’s deductions. You know that is something that could be written up, but I think 52 weeks is a long time... A company like mine can’t...you know if that guy has to be out for 52 weeks, then I have got to hire somebody, and you know pretty much that would make him unemployed at that point and we would have to be able to revisit...because he has to be able to claim some kind of income other than just sick leave or you know something else.” – Small Business, West

“Fifty-two weeks? So that could be off a whole year? That’s a tough question. We have had individuals who have had, either themselves or their husband or child...our example would be someone with leukemia...I think it’s certainly something that needs to be discussed, but I am not sure that I have a real answer or answer to that question. I think 52 weeks is a long time.” – Large Business, East

“Well it is too much time off for the medical part. I mean 52 weeks...that’s a whole year and that means you have a whole year that you don’t have that employee to do the work that he was hired for. Bad idea.” – Medium Business, East

“I like the 4 to 12 weeks of coverage. I do not like the 6 months to a year of medical coverage, even if it is employee funded. That I think is just difficult for employers to manage around. I mean they can’t have people gone for up to a year and not have the opportunity to refill those positions. That’s unrealistic in the employer world.” – Medium Business, West

Different states have adopted programs, including New York, California, New Jersey and Rhode Island. These states provide between 4 and 12 weeks of paid family leave and 26 – 52 weeks of medical leave depending on the type of leave they offer. In most of these, benefits are financed through payroll premiums, paid by employees, or a combination of employees and employers, varying from state to state.

- A number of employers of all sizes worry about being able to cover for an employee who is out for 52 weeks while also having to hire a replacement for them.
- Most still believe a 4 to 12 week period for family leave is appropriate.

Other employers have a number of questions about the mechanics of the programs in other states and provide between 4-12 weeks of paid family leave and 26-52 weeks of medical leave.

*“Well if we were providing anything, then the person working here wouldn’t make any money, so I don’t know. We can’t just give money just because. And I don’t know how programs...how are they providing it. Is it through Washington State? Is it like an insurance program? That doesn’t make sense that you would get money just because. **I don’t think I like any of that for us because...and I know other small businesses and that just wouldn’t work.**” – Small Business, East*

*“**The time offered sounds pretty generous to me.** In terms of the way it is financed, this is one of those things where your higher paid ...it’s one of those things...it’s like a 401k. It’s a grand thing, it’s minimally painful if you are making \$50,000 or \$60,000 a year, but if you are making \$10 an hour, it is just one more bite out of your paycheck. And that would be my concern. But it is something that I would be open to considering and open to bringing up to management.” –Large Business, East*

*“**Well 12 weeks is a huge time to ask other people to be working weekends and evenings to make up the difference for a department that has three people to say that we guarantee that you are going to have your job here, and it’s also not doable for an employer like myself to be able to bring someone onboard and offer them a full-time position only to say well after 12 weeks this person came back and now you have to go or to try to offer a position to someone who is looking full-time to fill a 12-week position knowing that they are going to be out of a job in another 12 weeks. And the plug and play may sound good to legislatures and to city council people, but not to a real business owner.**” – Small Business, West*

“Maybe they should have some kind of insurance policy that is paid for by the person and the company after so many people or whatever that they employ or this could be handled. But if this comes out the employer’s shoulders, it is pretty tough.” – Small Business, East

Different states have adopted programs, including New York, California, New Jersey and Rhode Island. These states provide between 4 and 12 weeks of paid family leave and 26 – 52 weeks of medical leave depending on the type of leave they offer. In most of these, benefits are financed through payroll premiums, paid by employees, or a combination of employees and employers, varying from state to state.

- Questions arise around
 - how employers could implement policies where people on both the higher pay scale and lower pay scale receive equal coverage.
 - how the other states implement the programs.



Proposed Elements in a Paid Family and Medical Leave Program



The employers were asked to consider a number of leave policies being considered for a paid family and medical leave program. The first – leave for an employee when they have a serious illness or injury – resulted in mixed reactions, though most were for including this type of leave in a program like this.

Yes, Should Include in Program

“Yeah, if it’s going to happen, then yes, I do. Yes well I think it would have to be dependent upon what kind of illness or injury it is. I don’t think you could just say it’s this number of weeks and that’s it.” – Medium Business, West

“Yes. I would say up to three months.” – Large Business, West

“Well yeah. I mean that’s what it would be for, right?” – Small Business, West

“Yes, I think it’s a good idea. I think so, yes.” – Medium Business, East

*“That would kind of be a case-by-case kind of thing... But **probably if it’s a reasonable amount of time.**”* – Medium Business, East

“Yeah, if you are going to have that type of a program, I think that’s a good idea.” – Small Business, West

“Yes. Twelve weeks.” – Medium Business, West

“Yeah, if we are going to do pay for them to be injured or whatever, I mean yes. If they have to take time off, we would want them to come back. So we would want to try to help take care of them while they are gone. I don’t really have a specific amount of time because everything is different. It takes longer to heal from things. It’s just everything is different and so I don’t really have anything in mind.” – Small Business, East

No, Should Not Include in Program

“I am not interested in paying...I mean if someone gets ill that’s terrible, but the truth is we all die. Every single one of us. And although I do owe something to my employees and I care for them a great deal, I don’t feel I should be paying a salary for someone that is ill and dying from whatever it might be unless it is work-related. I would certainly hold their job. If it’s money from a fund, then I am certainly for it – you know a fund or an insurance style program that my company has paid into. Then sure, they can have whatever benefits that the fund can support or whatever the voters of this state think is reasonable. But I do not want to pay somebody’s salary while they are dying. At least long-term for sure.” – Small Business, West

“That’s what insurance is for.” – Medium Business, East

“I am not sure. I think we would have to go almost by a case by case situation depending on the illness and you know the prognosis and that sort of thing.” – Medium Business, West

“I would say we already provide that in our short-term disability program...But we would prefer for it not to be mandated.” – Medium Business, East

“I am against it. I think if they are working they just need to be saving their money for those situations. It’s not different from what I am doing. If I have a member of my family that is sick and I have to take care of them, I still have a farm to take care of and I still have to make an income. I mean there is nobody...I don’t think that they are, my employees, any different than I am in that situation.” – Small Business, East

- The employers who say providing this type of leave would be a good idea note the coverage would be on a case by case basis.

- Those opposed to including this type of leave in a program refer to insurance programs and short-term disability.

Leave for an employee when they need to care for a seriously ill family member also resulted in mixed reactions from the employers.

Yes, Should Include in Program

"I think it's great. Again, I am for that also as long as it is just not...as long as I am not the only one footing the bill. Now, if we move forward as a state, I think the unemployment model is a great model to follow." – Small Business, West

"Again, following FMLA, yes, I do. I think the list that we have has worked very well for us for a lot of years. And that doesn't mean you couldn't have a real close aunt or uncle or distant cousin that you are caring for that you need to take time for. I mean I understand there are some exceptions out there, obviously, but you have to have a list. You have to have a list you can follow." – Medium Business, East

"Yes, to a certain extent. I would think they wouldn't need every single day, like they could do something like we do where you check in once a week and do what needs to be done and then take the rest of the week off. Like I said, it's a case-by-case on what your situation is.

Everything is so different; it's hard to determine one thing that would work for everybody. I would think immediate family whether it be parents, sister, brother, children, and spouse. I don't think your cousins should count. I would think they would have more family than that to help take care of them." – Small Business, East

"I think it should be included with maybe some stipulations or guidelines obviously you know. I would say immediate family – mother, father, siblings, grandparents... Spouse as well. I classify spouse as immediate family." – Small Business, West

"That's hard. I would say yes, but maybe only for six weeks. Yes, spouses, children, parents." – Large Business, West

"Yes, I think that's a definite need in our community, and so yeah, I think the FMLA directs how much time an employee is available to have and I think that's reasonable. Right now, we limit it to our spouse, parents, and immediate children." – Medium Business, East

No, Should Not Include in Program

"See now for me that depends on who the family member is. Like a child or a spouse or a mother or a father. Well I think kind of like the family, like that one, like the four to six weeks because I don't know this might sound kind of horrible or whatever, but there is only so much you can do for your family member before you really should get back to work and start earning money. Right? And if you weren't getting paid for it, you certainly wouldn't take as much time, right? I mean I don't know." – Small Business, West

"No. I would say if it was a child, maybe 30 days. Unpaid." – Medium Business, East

"I am not quite as...I would say no on that. I don't want to be heartless." – Medium Business, West

"I am not in favor of it." – Large Business, East

"I don't think so. Well because they should have other ways of having income or having aid for something like that." – Medium Business, West

"Well how far do you want to go? I mean how far do you want to carry this? I don't know. You know it's a tough situation." – Small Business, East

- Among employers who believe this type of leave should be included, stipulations arise. For most, immediate family members, including mothers, fathers, children, and spouses, would be covered under this type of leave.
- For those not in favor of including this leave in a paid leave program, the employers believe their employee should have other ways of covering income – this leave should be unpaid.

More employers are in favor of leave for an employee requesting maternity leave for a new baby or adopted child.

Yes, Should Include in Program

*"I would say about **three months** because if I remember correctly but when my kids were growing up, I remember when I first had them that daycares don't really like to take the newborns. So I would say about **3 months**."* – Small Business, West

"Washington State has a separate policy for that, but yes, I think that should cover it. Absolutely. I mean if they are lumping it all together, yeah." – Medium Business, East

"Well yes, four weeks." – Small Business, West

*"Yeah, there should be...honestly, I think there should be at least **six months on maternity leave**."* – Small Business, East

"Yes. 12 weeks again." – Medium Business, West

*"I would say they get the **12 weeks**, but only **4 of them would be paid**."* – Medium Business, West

"Yeah. That would come under FMLA. Well you have to provide up to 120 hours or 160 hours under FMLA." – Large Business, West

*"Yes. Yeah, I would say **six weeks**."* – Small Business, East

*"Yes, I do. I'd say **12 weeks**. It seems like a short period of time, but it seems to have worked in the past for those who are coming back after having a baby. I know it creates a hardship, I would like for it to be longer, but I think that does work."* – Medium Business, East

*"I think so mainly because it's a right, it's a right I think a woman should have. You need to not have to worry about providing for your child, especially because you have a lot more expenses at that time. **3 months**."* – Medium Business, East

No, Should Not Include in Program

"No, I think the maternity thing should be separate. I think that whole thing should be separate." – Medium Business, West

"Probably not." – Medium Business, East

"I would say we already provide that in our short-term disability program...But we would prefer for it not to be mandated." – Medium Business, East

*"**6 weeks unpaid**."* – Medium Business, East

- Those in favor think maternity leave should be covered anywhere from 12 weeks to 6 months.
- The handful of employers opposed to maternity leave being included in a paid leave program think it should be separate or unpaid.

To a lesser degree, employers overall are also in favor of leave for an employee requesting paternity leave for a new baby or adopted child.

Yes, Should Include in Program

"I guess it would be about the same as maternity leave. Because paternity leave sounds so ridiculous. I am kind of old-fashioned I guess. But I guess people do it now, especially because especially now that men adopt babies too and so I guess yeah. I guess that would be the same." – Small Business, West

"Yeah, for the father. Sure. Ma and Pa." – Small Business, West

"Yeah, I think that would be great. I think it depends upon the family situation." – Large Business, West

"I believe so. See, and this one I have...I think maybe like a month for a dad." – Medium Business, East

*"Yeah, and we already offer it. See to the point about mandating versus offering as a benefit, for those of us that are responsible employers today that takes away our competitive advantage when the state comes in and mandates leaves that we are already offering our employees today. **If everybody has to offer it, then that isn't a differentiator for us as an employee of choice where we operate.**"* – Medium Business, East

"Six weeks because there is no disability attached to it." – Large Business, West

"I think it should be included, but I think it's not really as necessary. I am less enthusiastic about that." – Small Business, West

"Well it is not fair to discriminate you know, so I think it should be for both." – Medium Business, East

"For an adopted child, yeah, I would say 12 weeks." Medium Business, East

"Yes, but a shorter length of time." – Large Business, West

No, Should Not Include in Program

"Probably not." – Medium Business, East

"That should be separate too." – Medium Business, West

"Well I guess I am against it because that doesn't apply to me. I am sitting here thinking about like with my hired man and when he had his family he was gone for a couple of days when his wife had a baby and then he would be back. So it was just a few days and he was back to work." – Small Business, East

"6 weeks unpaid." – Medium Business, East

*"Aren't men basically kind of useless anyway? They are only needed a few weeks and then let them go. **I don't know that paternity leave is all that important unless the mother needs them. Maybe a couple of weeks honestly. I mean if you don't have the mom, okay.**"* – Small Business, East

*"I don't feel that is necessarily needed because here is how I look at it...**I do not think that if a female worker has the baby and then the male worker, you know they have the child too, and that both get paid time off to be with their newborn. I mean that just seems to me excessive.** You are already paying for one person and there is a hardship on that company because they don't have their worker there producing and why should be double that."* – Small Business, West

Those in favor of paternity leave, cite families where there might not be a mother, but they attach shorter lengths of time to it compared to maternity leave.

Employers agree that both men and women should be eligible for this paid leave program.

"Absolutely. I am a daddy. Of course." – Small Business, West

"I am not sure how you could discriminate that. That's a strange question you are asking. I don't know how you discriminate. I mean you can't discriminate. It's got to be for both. And it makes me wonder why the heck you asked that question too." – Medium Business, East

"I just don't see a difference. It's not the 1960s." – Small Business, West

"Well the woman is having the child and she should be the one that usually has the main care of a child, so I would say I don't think that that's...I don't agree with that. I agree that a man should be able to take some time off, but 12 weeks? I don't agree with that." – Medium Business, East

"Well, again, I am less enthusiastic about it for men as I am for women because I think women need it because of the physical drain on their body and also because of the huge value of nursing babies. I mean it's the "science" and it's really hard to do that if you are working. Whereas men provide a lot of benefits to their children, one of them isn't that and so I am not as enthusiastic for men. I don't like to discriminate between the sexes and so for that reason I would say it should be available for both men and women." – Small Business, West

"I think they should be able to." – Small Business, East

"Yes. No discrimination. It has to be the same for everyone." – Medium Business, East

"I think it is different depending on the family structure, what is at home, but either one – male or female – finds themselves in that caretaker position, then it shouldn't matter." Medium Business, East

"The thought has never crossed my mind. I mean a guy should be able to do it as much as the gal can." – Medium Business, East

- Though some debated whether a man needed as much leave as the woman after the birth of a child, all agreed men should be given the option to take time off.

When given the opportunity to offer their own thoughts on an appropriate salary someone would be paid while taking family or medical leave, employers of all sizes offer between 50% and 100% of the salary.

"100%." – Large Business, West

"50%" – Small Business, West

"I think two-thirds. I think they should get...I don't want to say penalty for not being able to work, but ...I guess because I have this feeling that there are so many human nature parts about people that would just take advantage of it, I don't think it should be full salary." – Medium Business, West

"I thought the 40 to 2/3 percentage was pretty good in terms of percent. So I think maybe...I think it should go up to whatever the medium income is in that area. I mean you already know that in my case I pay 100%. I am not thinking that should be mandated or legislated." – Small Business, West

"To what they are currently making, it should be about half. I would think 50% when they are out." – Small Business, East

"Well you get what you earn and what you work for If you are not there working for it, then you don't earn it." – Small Business, East

"I think two-thirds is appropriate." – Medium Business, West

"I guess the same thing; it depends on the amount of time. I think for a shorter period of time, they should get 100%. If they are going to take extended leave, it would be at a lesser rate." – Large Business, West

"Well I almost wonder if in something like that you would want to do a graduated scale. Like say if they had been there for a year, there is a certain percentage, and if they have been there for five years, a higher percentage. I would think that that would be more realistic." – Large Business, West

"Actually, I think if people want to have a baby, they should plan ahead and not take it off from the company or do it through the insurance. I mean you know I don't understand all of that, unless it is set up through the company to do that. And they know going in because there is no way. I mean if I am having to pay somebody even 75% of the salary, I couldn't pay my bills." –Small Business, East

- Some employers suggest different percentages of wage replacement based on the length of leave an employee is taking or the length of time they have been with the company.
- To some small business employers, if an employee is not working for it, they should not be earning a wage while on leave. They believe if a person wants to have a baby, for example, they should plan ahead or cover the leave through insurance.

For wage replacement, employees would receive some portion of their normal salary during a family leave period. For example, one state program pays about half the salary, and another pays 2/3 the salary, and each state has an upper limit. In response to this, employers think the proportion of salaries the employee would receive sound reasonable and appreciate the upper limits implemented in the other states. This did not persuade employers who were already against providing paid leave, but did reassure those were in favor of the program.

Yes, Should Include in Program

"Well it seems reasonable. I mean the way you described it was one state pays and another state pays, which leads me to believe that it is a state-administered program and half to two-thirds seems completely reasonable." – Small Business, West

"Yep, that part of it sounds good to me and that it is divvied up somehow between the state and the employer and that there is limits." – Medium Business, West

*"I think it's realistic you know given some restraints on timeframe allowed out and how long. I mean obviously if somebody has got you know cancer or a long-term illness, if they are the only caregiver, then obviously they need that kind of time, but **I think their benefits as far as wage replacement – however much portion – should have some limitations on it.**"* – Small Business, West

*"Yeah, I would see that as being realistic to get. That is really gracious for the 2/3, but I mean **in my head I was thinking that it would be like about half the pay because you are obviously not at work, but I think either/or would be a reasonable amount.**"* – Medium Business, East

*"I probably see why they are doing that, but I think **it's kind of like what Illinois does. It's maybe like 80% of their salary. Yeah, but I see why they are doing that because they want the employees to come back to work. Because some people will take advantage, even if they don't no longer need it.**"* – Medium Business, East

"Yeah, I like that idea because it provides an incentive...it is like a worker's comp. It gives you an additional incentive to get back to work." – Large Business, East

"I think that's good. Yeah, I think it should be a percentage. I would go 60%." – Medium Business, West

No, Should Not Include in Program

"Again, I don't feel it is, but I do feel that the company should be able to offer short-term disability. I think that's the answer to helping pay people that take time off without pay if they had short-term disability. That would help." – Medium Business, East

"I don't support that. Again, I can only answer it based on my experiences and the way that my place of employment handles that and I think that we provide a very fair wage and a very fair benefit package and we also have a shared leave program that I think would cover that." – Large Business, East

"They shouldn't. Sorry. That's why you spend your money accordingly and you put money aside for emergencies. And I feel like this is helping millennials just get what they want on a regular basis because they think that they are owed something." – Medium Business, East

Employers in Washington split on whether or not those earning a minimum wage should receive a higher percentage of their wages while taking leave.

Yes

“Absolutely. Without a doubt. Well a person who earns minimum wage in Washington State can’t even afford an apartment alone, so if they are going to take some type of leave, you know they are not going to be able to meet their basic requirements, which means that they are less likely to take that leave. And you know what? I don’t think that maternity or paternity leave should be reserved for people who are of better means. I think you should be able to spend time with your baby if you are poor.” – Small Business, West

“I think that makes sense. I can see that because if you are only making minimum wage to start with, I mean that’s just not. I don’t have a problem with them getting a little bit more percentage wise.”—Medium Business, West

“I can agree with that.” – Medium Business, West

“I think putting a cap on, a dollar cap, the amount the state pays out will effectively do that. I don’t think they should say oh if you earn \$15/hour you should get this and if you earn \$20/hour you get a smaller percentage. I think they should just put a cap on it and that will effectively do that.” – Small Business, West

“I don’t think it should fall at half of minimum wage. I think it should be higher than that. Especially if they earn higher than that and it should still be above so that they are at least making something close to minimum wage, maybe two-thirds on those ones.” – Small Business, East

No

“No. I don’t think there is a connection. I am a firm believer in minimum wage. It is not a living wage. It’s a wage to start out with. It gives you an opportunity to advance in a company or another company to earn a higher wage and I think it should be based on whatever wage you are making at the time. I don’t think there should be any...no, I don’t think that’s right. To me, that would be discrimination against somebody who just happens to be making more because they worked harder or have been in the workforce longer too.” – Medium Business, East

“No because you know what they have the option of getting an education, and just because they are getting just minimum wage should not make the benefit higher for them. I mean they have a choice.” – Medium Business, East

“I think it should still be equal. So it should just be half of what you earn because then I feel like that’s discriminating on the people who do make more money. Yeah, I would say just because you work minimum wage you shouldn’t get more.” – Medium Business, East

“Well I think absolutely not. They should be the same. Just because you are making minimum wage doesn’t make you be allowed to make more than the guy that is making a bigger wage.” – Small Business, East

“I don’t think that that’s true. I don’t think that is necessary. I mean your wage is your wage.”—Medium Business, West

“I don’t think that is fair. You know the reasons could be varied, but at what point do you tip that line? I mean at what wage scale do you say oh no you make too much money to get the same percentage as someone who is makes less money than you?” – Large Business, West

Employers who favor offering minimum wage employees a higher percentage of their wages while on leave understand someone earning minimum wage in Washington already struggle to afford basic things while on their full salary, and this hardship would only increase if they were receiving a portion of their full salary while on leave.

Those against point out how that would be “unfair” to those who earn more than the minimum wage. They want it to be equal across all employees in the state.

For employers of all business sizes, job security for their employees – for at least the duration of their leave – is critical. They believe an employee should have worked with the company for at least a year in order to qualify for job security under paid family and medical leave.

“I think a person should have job security if they have to participate in any one of the things that you previously mentioned. Pretty critical I would think...I wouldn’t want to have to choose between my job or caring for a child or a family member that’s for sure...I mean I think if the employer would want to offer it to someone under a year, I think it would be reasonable...that could be the employer’s decision, but if you were going to legislate it, I think a year is a safe mark. Like I wouldn’t be all that thrilled if I hired someone and they came in and then three months later were pregnant.” – Small Business, West

“Really, that’s a tough one because it kind of depends on the job. I mean if the job that they had had to be filled by a new employee outside, then they may be able to come back, but not necessarily doing the same thing or at the same rate of pay.” – Medium Business, West

“For a period of time, yes. Not forever. I would go six months because things just happen sometimes.” – Large Business, West

“Oh yeah. You should be able to have your job back. After having a baby, I think your job should be available as long as you are able to do it. It seems like they should at least be there like a year.” – Small Business, East

“Yes, I think there is...I don’t want to say yes to that because I don’t think it should just be endless. I mean I think there should be some sort of rule or some type of thing like that, but yeah, I think it should be included. . . I do think there should be a certain amount of time. I am going to say they should be with a company at least three years before that would happen.” – Medium Business, West

“You should have job security. It is not your fault that these things happen. You should be able to expect your job as long as you remain in contact with your employer and tell them look this is what’s going on and I need this amount of time.” – Small Business, East

“The employee should know that their job or equal to is going to be there when they get back. You know it is good to have that other sense of security to know that when you are better or when you are ready to come back to work after having your baby or after caring for a close member your job is going to be there is critical. I think I would just go with the FMLA. It is a year or...I want to say 1280 hours or something like that. But I would say at least putting in a year.” – Medium Business, East

“I think we have a one-year requirement. I am 99% sure that is what our policy states right now. I think it is very important. In order to create a good or produce a good product or a good service or whatever you are doing, you need employees who trust the employer and know that the employer is looking out for their best interest and willing to accommodate them.” – Medium Business, East



Reactions to Funding Options for a Paid Family and Medical Leave

Employers' reactions to the cost estimated for a paid family and medical leave program – between two and three dollars per week per Washington worker – range from some thinking it is too low to cover all the benefits, some thinking it is about right and manageable, and others thinking there would be pushback from their employees for the high costs per paycheck.

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"It seems ridiculously low. I would be thrilled to pay three times that. I think \$3 per employee per week is...boy, to be able to have leave for you know paternity or maternity or medical, that seems ridiculously low. I can't imagine that anybody would be against that." – Small Business, West

"I would say low." – Large Business, West

"You mean [the cost of] a latte. I am thinking that it shouldn't even be discussed. It's a nonissue." – Small Business, West

*"I am thinking of what \$2 to \$3 a week would be and it's difficult without knowing all the calculations that go into it, but it **doesn't sound like too much**."* – Large Business, West

*"In other words, are you talking about a situation where like a premium or is this just an estimate of cost to employers or... So \$100 to \$150 basically. **It seems a little bit low to me**."* – Large Business, East

*"So it would be like six bucks a paycheck. I think that would be okay. **That's a reasonable amount of money to pay to have some income while you are out of work**."* – Small Business, West

*"I think that sounds fair. I think that **sounds like a decent number**."* – Medium Business, East

*"I think it sounds about right. **Two or three dollars per week isn't too bad**. For some of us, it's a little harder than others. I can see someone on minimum wage that a couple of bucks is a lot of money."* – Small Business, East

*"Two to three dollars a week. **It doesn't sound like a lot when you say that, so it seems manageable**."* – Medium Business, East

"It sounds like about the right amount." – Medium Business, West

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"So you are talking \$156 a year for every employee. At \$150, you are talking \$23,400 for 156 employees. That's quite a bit of money." – Medium Business, West

*"You know **for me that doesn't seem that much, but for like my line staff or for the single mom working upstairs, any amount coming out of our check can really create some challenges in your budget**."* – Large Business, West

*"I don't know. **There is so many little bits and pieces coming out of money already. I think that's probably too much**."* – Small Business, East

"So two or three dollars per week per employee that is using it or two or three dollars per week per employee that you employ? So let's say we average it at \$2.50. That's right under \$17,000 for us annually and that doesn't even make sense that that could cover someone's wage replacement. I don't understand how that would work. And who oversees that and how the whole thing works." – Large Business, East

*"I think that a lot of employees are going to complain even if it is the six dollars because it is very close to...well it is not close to, but it is minimum wage is \$9.47 and you are getting \$6 out of their paycheck every week. **I mean \$3 per week, which is \$6, so for people that get minimum wage, they will definitely feel it**."* – Medium Business, East

*"Well we are self-insured today and I would see us having a same view of any, heaven forbid, program that gets mandated by the state in this regard as well. **That is certainly a lot of money and it would have a financial impact on our business**."* – Medium Business, East

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The majority of these employers believe a combination of employer/employee funding is best.

"If the state wants to do it, the state can pay for it. For the amount of money that I pay into L&I Nursing and also that I pay to them, they can find a way to fund it." – Medium Business, East

"Well I think everybody should. It is kind of like Social Security, everybody pays in. You don't get a choice. You pay in and that's the way it works. I think everybody needs to be involved." – Medium Business, West

"You know I think all parties involved, employers and employees. Employees are getting something out of this. I mean they are investing in their livelihood. It is the way they should be positioned. Everybody should participate." – Small Business, West

"I really like the idea of having the employee and the employer have some investment in this, especially employee. I think they should have some investment in it. Just like an insurance policy is. I think that's interesting." – Medium Business, East

"If it is \$3 a week, it should be the employer. I don't know. I suppose you could have it so the employee could up in, but no. I think anything under \$10 a week is reasonable and that the employer should absorb those costs." – Small Business, West

"I think the employee. If they want to pay three dollars a week, then they are building something that the money could always be into a place for them or something. Maybe if they don't use it, then they can be refunded." – Medium Business, West

"A combination. It should be optional." – Large Business, West

"I think the employees should pay for it." – Small Business, West

"I would say the business, but also for like smaller businesses, I would say...well that would be discriminating again. Probably state and business combined." – Medium Business, East

"I think it should be split between the employer and the employee." – Medium Business, West

"It should be shared. Shared between employee and employer." – Medium Business, East

"I would like to see it spread across as large a pool as possible, so I would say some state tax support and some employee support and I like the idea of the employee premium and support from the business community as well. So some of that would be a business tax." – Large Business, East

- Others believe the state should have a stake in the program, the employee should be responsible for the funding entirely, or the employer should be able to absorb the minimal costs associated with it.

When reacting to the three funding options outlined, most employers favor payroll taxes split equally by the employees and employers as the means by which this program should be funded.

Payroll taxes split equally by the employees and employers	Payroll taxes paid entirely by the employer	Payroll taxes paid entirely by the employee
<p><i>"I think some sort of a split. I wouldn't be in favor of either one taking the whole burden."</i> – Medium Business, West</p> <p><i>"The split."</i> – Small Business, East</p> <p><i>"I think it should be between, yeah, the employee and employer. I don't think...and maybe I am stretching it a little bit, but it shouldn't be an item, which requires the state to implement a tax to fund it. It should be something that is worked out between the specific individual employee and employer."</i> – Medium Business, East</p> <p><i>"I would go with the split. It just seems like...and I don't know that I would prefer the 50/50 split. I might do one that is more heavily weighted to the employee. But it just seems like this ought to be a shared burden because it affects both individual employees and it affects the company."</i> –Large Business, East</p> <p><i>"Best to split it up because as I am an employee if I am going to pay for that either way, I will just minus some money on the side you know. It doesn't always happen and I understand that's the convenience of having that. And like I said, mainly if the employees pay for it all, they will feel it, even if you think it is three dollars per week. It's not a lot, but think about it, there are 52 weeks in a year and so it will impact them one way or another. As an employer, if you have let's say 150 employees and \$3 per let's say 115 per week and then every week for 52 weeks, obviously, it is going to be impacting as well. So splitting it will be best."</i> – Medium Business, East</p>	<p><i>"If it's \$3 a week, I think the employer should absorb that. I don't see any reason...but then again, if it's going to be a straight payroll tax, you know...I don't know. I am in favor of either a split or the employer."</i> – Small Business, West</p>	<p><i>"The employee."</i> –Medium Business, East</p> <p><i>"Payroll taxes paid by the employee."</i> – Small Business, West</p> <p><i>"I think it should be paid by employees as a payroll tax."</i> – Large Business, West</p> <p><i>"Employee. You know because I am a business owner and we already have enough matching. I would rather have it come out and go back to them."</i> –Small Business, East</p> <p><i>"From our perspective, we already offer a lot of benefits, so I think that...and even \$2 to \$3 is going to be very large when you talk about 40,000 employees, so I think that employees should have some responsibility for funding."</i> – Large Business, West</p> <p><i>"Well the employees are the ones who are pushing this thing and want it, let them pay for it I guess because damn the employer already has a hell of a payroll tax and he has a business tax and he has a state sales tax and he has got import and export tax and he has got you name it."</i> – Small Business Owner, East</p>

However, even though many favor the split option, when we followed up on which option would be most realistic, employers do not come to consensus on which is the most realistic option to actually implement.

“At the dollar amount that you stated, I would say the employer. And I am sure I am in the minority on that, but only because you are talking to employers.” – Small Business, West

“For us, obviously, the 100% employer paid.” – Large Business, East

“I think the split. Some kind of split. I don’t even know if it has to be 50/50, but some type of split.” – Medium Business, West

“The 50/50 split.” – Medium Business, West

“The most realistic to me would be the half and half. Well you know that way the employer is not covering and bearing the entire load and will also put the employee in a situation that they know they are paying for this as well. And you know some of the things...where are the limits going to be and where is the stop point of going okay it is time for me to get back to work? Let’s face it; people learn how to manipulate the system and take advantage of systems and then they are taking advantage of the employer. And I don’t think that’s a fair way to have a program like that.” – Small Business, West

“[The employee pays] absolutely because they are the ones that are going to be benefiting from it overall. I mean they can foresee if they are going to be having a baby. They are going to be foreseeing if they are going to be having an adoption. And if it’s something that they want to invest in and prepare themselves for, then they should be paying into it.” – Medium Business, East

“The employee.” – Small Business, West

“All of it being paid by the employees.” – Medium Business, West

- Those in favor of the employer-only funding option note the low dollar amount per Washington worker per week.
- Those in favor of a split between employers and employees like that the employees are invested in the program and the burden is not entirely on the employer.
- Those in favor of the employee-only funding option think this is the most realistic because they are the ones benefitting from the program.

If there were a tax credit for small businesses, employers of small and medium size businesses think it would be “fantastic” and “a good thing.” If the tax credit were enough to cover a significant amount of the costs, it would be encouraging to employers who feel this program would be forced on them. Some still worry about bigger businesses getting hurt with the cost.

In Favor of Tax Credit

“That would be fantastic.” – Small Business, West

“Great. I will take it.” – Small Business, West

“That would be great.” – Large Business, West

*“Absolutely. Yes. Okay, so I am going to ask you a question. **What is your definition of a small business? And you don’t have an answer for that. Because in different scenarios and different worlds and different states and different issues you are talking about, people’s definition of a small business, medium business, and large business are totally different. It’s totally different.** So my question to you is what’s your definition of a small business? **But again, using my definition of a small business, yeah, I think that would be fair to have some tax incentives and tax credits.**” – Medium Business, East*

“It would have to be huge.” – Medium Business, East

“Well yes, I think it would be an incentive; I don’t think it is necessary. I think all the money should go into paying the employees.” – Small Business, West

*“Yeah. It would make us look at it differently. Depending on what the tax credit is and how it works out. **If the tax credit is enough to cover the employer paying more of the employee’s wages and taxes and all that, then it would make us feel a lot more comfortable in basically being forced to provide paid leave.**” – Small Business, East*

“Well any kind of tax credit for small businesses is a good thing. Again, I am not a big believer in the state, local or federal government in the ability to be truthful as far as those tax credits because it’s like well we will give you this credit, but we are going to reach around the backside here and cover it by taking another tax here. I am not to believing that they are going to do all that for you for nothing.” – Small Business, West

“Yeah, I think so. Well if we are getting a credit, it is good for us and so you know why not.” – Medium Business, East

Unsure/Would Not Apply

“Maybe, but like in our case, we are not a true small business because we are nationally a big business and so it doesn’t really help the small business related to a big business, and that’s where we kind of hit hard in this situation or in these situations.” – Large Business, West

“It’s such a low rounding thing that I don’t think it’s that big a deal. I mean even if I had 100 employees, then I am multi, multi-million-dollar business, so I don’t think that personally should impact it at all. It’s not the reason why I would say yes or no. I am not even saying it is good that it happens.” – Small Business, West

*“Well if there was a tax credit for small companies, then...I mean how does the program get funded...it just makes a bigger burden for bigger companies. So the bigger you are, the more you have to pay, which is the way it is anyway. I don’t know. **I am not 100% sure how I would feel about that.**” – Medium Business, West*

*“I think that **it would still end up costing the employers too much.**” – Small Business, East*

Impact of a Paid Family and Medical Leave Program on the State of Washington

Some employers anticipate the implementation of a paid family and medical leave program would affect how they operate – from hiring practices to budgeting.

*“Absolutely. **I would have to be very careful about what demographic and age demographic that I hire.**”* – Medium Business, East

*“Well if the law mandated more than I am already providing, yes, it would, but I don’t think that would be the case. **I would just adopt the laws. I would confirm to whatever the laws were.**”* – Small Business, West

*“It depends on what the rules would be on like cutoff points for when an employee is eligible and that kind of thing. If they are eligible the moment they walk in the door, then yes, we probably wouldn’t hire seasonal workers anymore. We do that on occasion... **We’d try to stick to more full-time employees that have been here and keep them here.**”* – Small Business, East

*“**I would be a lot more careful hiring someone.**”* – Small Business, East

“Well I think it is going to affect every business. You know prices are going to have to climb. The same as the minimum wage thing. I mean it’s going to affect businesses if they are forced to give people a certain dollar an hour at minimum wage. Their prices are going to have to increase to cover those dollars, which is fine to a point, but are people going to buy those products at that much higher price? Are they going to be willing to spend that money on that product? And so there is going to be a business loss I believe because of that increased cost.” – Small Business, West

*“I think we would...this is something I am partnering with my GM with, but just going and making sure that we are hiring...not just so we have bodies...just making sure that we have quality people, people that want to invest in the company and stay here for long-term...because obviously if there is a program like this, that’s a huge benefit for them. **So I would just say making sure that we are bringing on people who want to stay here for the long-term.**”* – Medium Business, East

*“It would depend on how much it would end up costing me as an employer. **If it costs too much, then I am going to change how I keep my employees.**”* – Small Business, East

*“**We would have to figure out a way to fund it, we would have to figure out what benefits come off the table, and we would have to figure out...it all comes down to dollars, right, to be able to pay for something because I am guessing it is going to be an unfunded mandate from the state the way it is teed up here.** So we would have to figure out a way within the confines of our own business to make it work. So we’d have to change something somewhere to pay for it.”* – Medium Business, East

Others, particularly medium and large businesses, do not believe the implementation of a paid family and medical leave program will have any significant impact on how they operate.

“No, not really because I just don’t see how we would do anything any different. I mean I can’t imagine what we would do different just because we had to pay leave.” – Small Business, West

“No.” – Small Business, West

“No.” – Medium Business, East

“No, it would not.” – Medium Business, West

“I don’t know that it would. It might affect a couple of our decisions or policies like do we cash our vacation when somebody leaves. I don’t know that it would have a big affect on us.” –Large Business, East

“I don’t think so. Not really.” –Medium Business, West

“No, no. It wouldn’t change. We would continue to do it. I try to provide as much care to my staff without any government involvement or assistance.” – Medium Business, East

“I don’t believe so.” – Medium Business, West

“Probably not.” – Medium Business, West

“It wouldn’t change how I do business.” – Large Business, West

On the other hand, employers can see the program impacting their employees, both positively and negatively.

*"I don't think it would change anything for them either except that if they have to pay a portion of it or whatever that they might complain about that. And if you are a person that struggles...like **I live pretty much paycheck to paycheck and six extra dollars would hurt me, but I would appreciate the peace of mind** because I have been thinking already for myself looking at something like Aflac or some kind of supplemental insurance for if something happened and I had to be out of a work permanently. So some people it might be a burden even to pay six extra dollars with the thought that they may never, ever get any return on that."* – Small Business, West

"I mean knowing that there is some type of paid leave out there, which in a lot of cases they get from us anyway, you know it probably would. I think there might be more peace of mind on the employee's portion." – Medium Business, East

"I think, honestly, with the mentality of some of my employees and especially with caregivers, they are going to take advantage of it and they are probably going to abuse it." – Medium Business, East

*"It depends. **If they are going to have to put money out, they are going to be little disgruntled employees because nobody wants to pay out extra money** if they don't know if they are ever going to see it again."* – Small Business, East

"I mean I think it would give him a good peace of mind and at least they get some assistance you know where I can only limit you know how much I can give to my employee when he is out just simply because it is such a small company. But no, I think it would help them immensely." – Small Business, West

"I think it would. I think they would see more of the "what's in it" for them and they would be more wanting to do a better job to stay here and be more committed to the business to know that they are getting that kind of a benefit." – Medium Business, East

*"I wouldn't see that change because I think we are very fortunate now as employees to have things like family medical leave in place...I don't know that it would change much. **I do think the potential is there again as I said for certain people to take advantage.**"* – Large Business, East

"It very well could. Just as an example, we would have to reduce our match on our 401k or take away vacation time so maybe they don't get as much." – Medium Business, East

*"For a few individuals, yes, it absolutely would. **I think it would change things for the better for them.** You know having that additional support would probably allow them to stay off the job until they are truly healthy enough to come back. **For most people, I don't think it would affect them.**"* – Large Business, East

- Peace of mind for the employees rises to the top as a positive impact this program would have for employees.
- Employers are concerned their employees will become disgruntled when they see the additional payroll tax. They also share a concern about employees abusing the system.

Employers believe the program would have a positive impact on communities and some say it would have helped them personally. However, some worry that the negative impacts on the business side of implementation might affect their lives and businesses.

Impact on Community

"Oh, absolutely. I think that we are going to have an even harder time trying to find people to actually work and do jobs, especially in this field, as in care giving." – Medium Business, East

"Yeah, because I mean it would...I really think it would be something that would help boost morale within our business and that is something that the community will see, and to know that we are supporting that type of program, I think that is something that the community would be happy to see." – Medium Business, East

"I think it would change the perception that people have on working. I think that they'd be more appreciative of their employer if they participated in a program like that." – Medium Business, West

"If it were across the board, I think it might. I think it would make life easier for the lowest paid among us." – Large Business, East

"Probably. People might be more satisfied with their work/personal life ratio." – Medium Business, West

"I don't see why it would." – Small Business, West

"Not really." – Medium Business, West

Impact on Personal Life (of Employer)

"It would change it significantly on the business side. Harder to run my business and harder to have enough staff and having to pay more overtime." – Medium Business, East

"One more thing to administer. It would make budgeting all the more interesting. Beyond that, I don't think so." – Large Business, East

"I don't think it is going to change my life personally unless I have to go through something like that you know. I mean anybody is going to change if they have to take...you know their lifestyle is going to be turned upside down if they have to be the caregiver. I have some customers that are taking care of their mother or father and you know they are on whatever programs they can get on to help them, but you know their lifestyle definitely changed." – Small Business, West

"Yeah, I think it would. Just to know that I had that safety net that if something happens to someone in my family – you know to my parents or to my siblings – that I have something like that to help me get through moneywise, but then also know that I would have my job when I was able to come back." – Medium Business, East

"Not one bit. No." – Medium Business, West

"It would have. It would have for the better because I have adopted children and I didn't take any leave at all." – Large Business, West

"It would I think because it would also give me that peace of mind." – Medium Business, East

For employers, the most compelling reason to offer paid family and medical leave to employees is to give “peace of mind” and to ensure a plan is in place when a family crisis may arise. Some also note offering a benefit like this would bolster recruitment of future employees and would be good for employee morale.

“It is good for peace of mind and it’s a good benefit to have, but it is something that we have been living without forever and so I mean I don’t really see it...to me, it is not a necessity, but it would be nice.” – Small Business, West

“The most compelling reason would be because there are a lot of people that have family crises that are rendered, I mean they could be homeless, they could be, I just don’t think that we ought allow people to just have everything taken away from them because they have some sort of family crisis.” – Medium Business, West

“I think the best reason for it is people need it. I mean they get sick. It’s life. The family gets sick and so I think it would provide security for people.” –Medium Business, West

“Well you are talking to an HR Director and so I would say recruiting would be the most compelling reason.” – Large Business, West

“The most compelling reason is that it helps the employees, and if the employees are happy and feel secure in their job, everything goes better at work. And if we can help them when they are basically at their worst because they are dealing with some horrible things, if we can help them get through that, then they are happy to come back and get back to work.” – Small Business, East

“I think it just would be a nice benefit and a nice peace of mind for employees to have and that they are not out in the cold with nothing if they come up against some kind of difficulty in their life. You know they get some assistance much like the lower income people with ObamaCare. They now get some health care and you know that’s got to be a pretty good feeling for a lot of people.” – Small Business, West

“My employees are very valuable to me. I think we have a strong family atmosphere here. I think it is a good employee morale, which again feeds into our first and foremost goal and that is customer service. In order to provide a high quality customer service, you have to have employees who believe in the service for one and know the employer is prepared to assist them to do their job. That’s what we strive to do – be able to provide the needs of our employees so they can provide the strongest service possible for our residents of Spokane County.” – Medium Business, East

“I think to allow individuals the opportunity to survive. To maintain being able to have a home and to raise their children and put food on the table.” – Large Business, East

“Human decency. As I have said before, this country likes to talk a good game about family values and supporting families, but the reality on the ground is we do very little to actually accomplish that. I think this kind of paid leave program, although it would be painful from the company’s standpoint in some ways...I think you can make a compelling case for helping somebody survive a life event like that and come back to work after you are done. I think you get better employees for it.” –Large Business, East



Context: Demographics of Employers

The tenure of the workforce at the businesses interviewed depends primarily on the type of service provided (seasonal v. non-seasonal), though the majority of the workforce “stays around” for at least a couple years.

*“We have both. **We have people that work here for many years, since the company started, but we also have people that come in here for a month or two and we have a lot of turnover.**” – Medium Business, East*

*“Yeah, **tenure is probably over three years. It depends on the group.** Some of our employees are retired delivery drivers and others are long-term CDT technicians. The career technicians tend to be here much longer. The retired delivery drivers and service staff are here for maybe three or four years.” – Small Business, East*

“For many years. Oh, I’d say the average is probably around 10 to 15 years.” – Medium Business, West

“Everybody that has been here has been here for several years, except me. I am new.” – Small Business, West

*“**We have had very long employee tenure in most departments. There are departments like the production line that tend to turn over more frequently.** But average tenure right now is a little over 10 years.” – Large Business, East*

*“We kind of have a combination. We have **some people that have been here for quite a while and then we do have people that just come back during like our peak season,** so like a lot of younger kids that are not in school and they will come up and work for the summer.” – Medium Business, East*

*“It depends on the job. **Some jobs turnover really quickly and then other jobs are a lot longer.**” – Large Business, West*

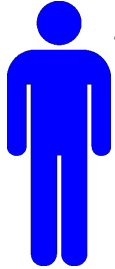
*“Not really. **We have turnover.**” – Medium Business, West*

*“I think we have **pretty good longevity.** I think we have an average stay here of approximately four to five years.” – Medium Business, East*

*“We have 25-year employees and we have six months, but **pretty much everybody kind of stays around.**” – Medium Business, West*

“We have about 50/50. We have several people who have been here for you know 15 or 20 years. It depends on which department we are talking about.” – Large Business, West

For most businesses interviewed, the workforce is primarily male. Few interviewed have more women than men in their workforce.



"More men than women." – Medium Business, East

"There is more men than women." – Medium Business, West

"More men than women." – Medium Business, East

"More men than women." – Small Business, East

"Two men." – Small Business, West

"I have had the same man working for me for the last 14 years." Small Business, East

"No. Male. Male dominant." – Medium Business, West

"I'd say there is more men than women." – Medium Business, West

"That's an interesting question. I haven't really looked at that lately, but I would say there are more men than women, but not a substantially larger number." – Large Business, East

"It's probably more men than women." – Large Business, West

"There is more men." – Medium Business, West

"No. I think there is only two out of 13 employees that are female." – Small Business, West

"I'd say it is pretty even." *We might have a few more women, but it's pretty even."* – Medium Business, East

"It's about even." – Small Business, West

"I want to say it is probably even. It is fairly even. Fairly even. Probably it is 55 to 65 percent men, but it is fairly even." – Medium Business, East

"It is pretty even." – Small Business, East

"I'd say it is about even." – Medium Business, East

"Our ratio of men to women is about 50/50." – Large Business, West

"It's about even." – Large Business, East

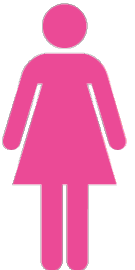
"It's about even." – Medium Business, West

"More women than men. . . I think I have maybe six men out of that 105." – Medium Business, East

"More women than men." – Small Business, West

"More women than men." – Medium Business, East

"More women than men." – Small Business, West



Regardless of business size, the average perceived age of employees in the State of Washington is between 30 and 50 years old.

*"It's probably...I would say the average age is **probably around 40.**" – Medium Business, West*

"35." – Small Business, West

"Oh man...early to mid 30's probably is an average." – Medium Business, East

"I would say average age is probably going to be early 30's right now." – Medium Business, West

*"You know **some are in 20's and some are in their 30's.** Younger as far as the contractors go for sure." – Small Business, West*

*"**Let's say 35.**" – Large Business, West*

"I want to say 30's. We have different ages, but if I put them all together, it's probably going to be 30's." – Medium Business, East

*"Probably right around... **I would say 28 would be a good average.**" – Medium Business, East*

"It is 37." – Large Business, West

*"I am going to say gosh, **probably 30.**" – Medium Business, West*

"We have them in their late 70's and their early 20's, so I am going to say probably around 35." – Medium Business, West

"That's funny that you ask because I just did my study for the Census. Yeah, 36." – Medium Business, West

*"Well let's see – **between 35 and 60.**" – Small Business, East*

"Well it is just dropping actually to probably about 48/50. We haven't seen younger individuals moving in, which is great." – Large Business, East

"About 50." – Small Business, West

*"I would say **probably 45.**" – Medium Business, East*

"Kind of old. Probably average would be...let me do a quick calculation here...46." – Small Business, West

"Over 50. We have two under 40 and the rest are over, I think, 60 years old." – Small Business, East

*"I would guess on average would be **probably 52.**" – Small Business, West*

"Oh, good question. I would estimate it to be 40...about 45." – Medium Business, East

"I would say...I had a couple this summer that were 14 and 15 and then we go anywhere up to 50+." – Medium Business, East

*"**I am going to say about 40 to 45.**" – Large Business, East*

"42." – Large Business, West