

October 7, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McConnell:

In light of the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*, there is heightened urgency to advance legislation that would offer support to new mothers, fathers, and babies. Although *Roe v. Wade* is a divisive topic, we can all agree that families in our country urgently need legislative support, including a federal paid family leave policy after the birth or adoption of a new child. It is our hope that Congress would work together to craft a lasting, bipartisan plan for paid family leave.

Currently, only 23% of workers and 9% of those with low wages have access to parental leave. Imagine how dire the financial situation for a family must be when mothers are forced back to work within 10-14 days after giving birth? With both parents working in 64% of all households with children, unpaid leave could financially devastate some families. Most women seeking abortion cite the cost of the child as the main reason.

Some parents have been forced onto public assistance in order to spend those first few months with their new babies. Research confirms that mothers who have paid leave are 39% less likely to receive public assistance and 40% less likely to use food stamps. Paid leave keeps workers connected to the workforce and ready to return when their leave is over, increasing positive outcomes for the mother and the child. Since the parents continue to be taxpayers instead of government aid recipients, this also has a positive impact on the federal budget, deficit, and debt.

Early bonding with parents is crucial for children's long-term physical and mental health. The first few months of a baby's life are especially important for brain development. Studies show that infants whose mothers had at least three months of paid leave experience more complex brain development in their first months of life. The infant brain is highly elastic and develops positively when a baby experiences warm and predictable social interactions with parents. And in contrast, parental stress negatively impacts infant brain development. Consequently, paid leave provides life-long benefits for child development by facilitating early bonding between infants and parents.

Federal paid leave resonates with a plurality of voters. According to a March 2022 Echelon survey, paid leave now has broad backing that crosses party lines (71%), with support coming from conservatives (65%), moderates (68%), liberals (83%), and all ethnicities. Paid leave can truly be called a bipartisan priority now.

We are also encouraged to hear of new separate plans from Senators Mitt Romney and Marco Rubio and a bipartisan plan from Senators Bill Cassidy and Krysten Sinema that would use the Child Tax Credit to offer support to families. We hope Members of Congress will continue exploring innovative ways to support families struggling under the current cost of living to meet their financial ends.

As leaders of the 117th Congress, would you prioritize working towards a bipartisan paid leave plan so that all families, regardless of income level, have the best opportunity to start off strong and healthy?

We know there are many urgent issues that come before you daily, but none are more important than policies that serve our youngest citizens and the common good.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Rick Santorum

Former U.S. Senator, Pennsylvania
Chairman, Patriot Voices

Kristan Hawkins

President, Students for Life Action

Ryan T. Anderson, Ph.D.

President, The Ethics and Public Policy Center

Carlos Duran

President, National Hispanic Pastors Alliance

Reverend Dean B. Nelson

National Chairman, Douglass Leadership Institute

Kathryn Lopez

Senior Fellow, National Review Institute

Bob Vander Plaats

President and CEO, The FAMiLY LEADER

Terry Schilling

Executive Director, American Principles Project

Samuel Rodriguez

Lead Pastor, New Season
President/CEO, NHCLC

Kelly M. Rosati, J.D.

CEO, KMR Consulting

Jon Schweppe

Director of Policy and Government Affairs, American Principles Project

Mark Rodgers

Principle, The Clapham Group

Michael Toscano

Executive Director, The Institute for Family Studies

Nadine Maenza

Senior Advisor, Patriot Voices

Hon. Jeff Coleman

Founder and Principal, Churchill Strategies

Patrick Purtill

Director of Legislative Affairs, Faith & Freedom Coalition

Brad Wilcox

Future of Freedom Fellow, Institute for Family Studies

Patrick T. Brown

Fellow, Ethics and Public Policy Center

Michael Hernon

President, The Messy Family Project

(list still in formation)

*Affiliations are for identification purposes only.