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Patient Groups Praise National Paid Family and Medical Leave Program in Reconciliation Bill

Ways and Means Committee Considers Details of a Comprehensive Program for People with Serious Conditions and Their Caregivers

Washington, D.C.—September 9, 2021—More than a dozen patient advocacy organizations are commending the House Ways and Means Committee as it begins considering details of legislation to create the country’s first ever national paid family and medical leave program as part of the budget reconciliation package.

The legislation includes up to 12 weeks of paid medical, parental and caregiver leave for all workers starting in 2023 and would be structured to minimize economic hardship for all workers who need to take leave.

“Paid family and medical leave is critical for people with serious illnesses and health conditions and their caregivers,” said Lisa Lacasse, president of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN). “Cancer treatment and recovery—like many illnesses—is often difficult and drawn out. We need to do everything we can to ensure people can care for themselves and their loved ones without facing financial devastation.”

The provisions included in the legislation meet many of the [standards](#) that more than two dozen patient and health care partners put forth in July detailing what a comprehensive family and medical leave program should include, such as inclusion of medical and caregiving leave, inclusion of an adequate, equitable, and sufficient duration of paid leave, and availability to all workers.

Currently only about one-fifth of workers in the United States have access to employer-paid family leave and only two in five have access to short-term disability insurance through their jobs that allows them to receive partial pay while they recover from their own serious health issue. Fewer than 60 percent of workers qualify for job-protected, unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), and workers of color, low-wage workers and single parents are disproportionately excluded.

“We need Congress to act swiftly and ensure a meaningful and comprehensive leave program is included in the reconciliation package. Millions of American families need this essential benefit,” said Lacasse.

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Patient groups and partners calling for a paid family and medical leave policy: The AIDS Institute, Alliance for Aging Research, ALS Association, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American

Heart Association, Cancer Support Community, The Child Neurology Foundation, Epilepsy Foundation, Family Voices, Hemophilia Federation of America, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Hemophilia Foundation, National Organization for Rare Disorders, Susan G. Komen, WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease, UsAgainstAlzheimer's