



**Mothers' Views on the FAMILY ACT:
Final Report**

October 2023

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Introduction

In August 2023, Count on Mothers conducted research to find out mothers' views and experiences relating to the FAMILY Act. Actionable Insights are provided followed by the full research summaries. We conduct research because we believe that mothers' first-hand experiences and knowledge are critical sources of information in the federal policy making process, particularly on bills that affect kids or the conditions of raising a family in the U.S. We share this data with legislators and the public so that they may have a better understanding of how a bill could help or hurt a family.

Actionable Insights at a Glance

From Mothers We Surveyed

- This bill contains points of mostly alignment with some differences among Mothers.
- Overwhelmingly, Mothers were aligned across the political spectrum on believing:
 - Employees should have up to 12 weeks of partial income when they take time off from work for reasons relating to health, caregiving, and/ or military deployment of a relative.
 - Employees who have worked for more than 90 days at the same job should be able to return to their jobs after paid leave and without retaliation from employers.
 - Mothers believe that full-time employees should earn up to 2/3 of their regular wages on this paid leave.
- The majority of mothers – regardless of political ideology – agreed on the importance of providing paid leave to employees regardless of company size, full-time/part-time status, and/ or self-employment status. However, there was variation within each political ideology and particularly, a conservative split between conservative and very conservative members with conservative Mothers more likely than very conservative Mothers to support this provision.
- Overall, aside from Mothers who identify as very conservative, Mothers believe that lowest-paid employees should earn up to 85% of their regular wages on this paid leave.
- Overall, Mothers across the political spectrum supported this item with very strong support from all but very conservative Mothers.

Actionable Insights at a Glance

From Mothers We Interviewed

- The qualitative data provides narratives from five mothers' own words as they consider the FAMILY Act and the issues it seeks to address based on their first-hand experience.
- Similar themes arose among all mothers regardless of political ideology, including the balance of caregiving and employment, an array of stressors related to child bearing and child rearing, including health needs, all of which impacted their lives.
- They each identify that their privilege - or access to private resources - alleviated some of their own stress and they recognize that not all mothers have access to such resources.
- The five mothers provided assessment of the FAMILY Act that evidence their support of the FAMILY Act — they liked the broader inclusivity overall, believed the safety net provisions would be critical to families, and provided additional comments related to the bill to be written and to be implemented correctly.
- Finally, the five mothers believe the FAMILY Act would create a paradigm that would have a positive health impact on families and a positive shift in the domain of care giving, paid leave, and employment.

Quantitative Study Summary

Count on Mothers **provides legislators with comprehensive first-hand data to help them make more informed decisions.** Each policy that we survey mothers on, across the country and political spectrum, is chosen based on what these surveyed mothers want to address. Every mother is welcomed.

In August 2023, Count on Mothers studied mothers' views on the "FAMILY (Family and Medical Insurance Leave) Act." We do this because we believe that a mothers' first-hand experience and knowledge is a critical source of information in the federal policy making process, particularly on bills that affect kids and families. 309 Mothers in 41 states and across the political spectrum completed the survey and shared their views. We take this aggregate data and share it with the public and with policy makers so they are educated on mothers' views on the "FAMILY Act," and that they may have a better understanding on how a bill could help or hurt a family.

Methodology

Design

The design is a quantitative, cross-sectional design.

Instrument

Survey questions are constructed based on main tenets of the FAMILY Act as well as questions to assess mothers' political ideology and state/ zip code of residence that describe the sample.

Sampling Procedure

Count on Mothers employs both purposive and snowball sampling strategies. Concerted efforts were made to advertise and distribute the survey to as many mothers as possible via Instagram and Google advertisements as well via joining and announcing the survey on a wide array of mothers' Instagram groups – across political affiliation. Additionally, mothers who receive and/ or complete the survey were encouraged to distribute the survey to mothers they believe will be interested in completing the survey.

Sample

309 Mothers completed the survey and reflected a range of political ideologies from very conservative to very liberal. Mothers resided in 41 of 50 states.

Findings

9 in 10 Mothers surveyed believed:

- Employees should have up to 12 weeks of partial income when they take time off from work for reasons relating to health, caregiving, and/ or military deployment of a relative.
- Employees who have worked for more than 90 days at the same job should be able to return to their jobs after paid leave and without retaliation from employers.
- Full-time employees should earn up to 2/3 of their regular wages on this paid leave.
- Lowest-paid employees should earn up to 85% of their regular wages on this paid leave.

8 in 10 Mothers surveyed believed:

- The "FAMILY Act" will (or would have had) a positive impact on their families
- Paid leave should apply to employees regardless of company size, full-time/part-time status, and/ or self-employment status.

Bill Component Questions

97% of Mothers believe employees should have up to 12 weeks of partial income when they take time off from work for reasons relating to health, caregiving, and/ or military deployment of a relative.

Belief	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Strongly Agree	277	89.6%
Agree	24	7.8%
Uncertain	4	1.3%
Disagree	3	1.0%
Strongly Disagree	1	0.3%
	309	100.0%

Overwhelmingly, on the above item, Mothers were aligned across the political spectrum on this issue.

- 96% of Mothers who identified as conservative and 79% who identified as very conservative agreed with this statement. 4% of conservative and 21% of very conservative Mothers expressed uncertainty or disagreement.
- 95% of Mothers who identified as moderate agreed with this statement. 5% of moderate Mother expressed uncertainty or disagreement.
- 100% of Mothers who identified as liberal and 98% of Mothers who identified as very liberal agreed with this statement. 2% of very liberal mothers voiced uncertainty.

92% of Mothers believe that lowest-paid employees should earn up to 85% of their regular wages on this paid leave.

Belief	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Strongly Agree	257	83.2%
Agree	26	8.4%
Uncertain	18	5.8%
Disagree	5	1.6%
Strongly Disagree	3	1.0%
	309	100%

On the above item, the trend showed that Mothers – aside from very conservative Mothers – agreed on this issue across the political spectrum. For example,

- Conservative mothers varied on this issue. 76% of Mothers who identified as conservative agreed with this issue while 57% who identified as very conservative were uncertain or disagreed with this issue. 24% of conservative Mothers joined very conservative Mothers in being uncertain or disagreeing with this statement. In contrast, 43% of Mothers who were very conservative supported this issue.
- 92% of Mothers who identified as moderate agreed with this statement. 8% of moderate Mothers expressed uncertainty or disagreement.
- 97% of Mothers who identified as liberal and 98% of Mothers who identified as very liberal agreed with this statement. 3% of liberal Mothers and 2% of very liberal Mothers voiced uncertainty.

94% of Mothers believe that full-time employees should earn up to 2/3 of their regular wages on this paid leave.

Belief	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Strongly Agree	262	84.8%
Agree	28	9.1%
Unsure	13	4.2%
Disagree	3	1.0%
Strongly Disagree	3	1.0%
	277	100.0%

On the above item, the trend showed Mothers supporting the issue regardless of political ideology. For example,

- 88% of Mothers who identified as conservative and 64% who identified as very conservative agreed with this issue. 12% of conservative Mothers and 36% of very conservative mothers were uncertain or disagreed with this statement.
- 94% of Mothers who identified as moderate agreed with this statement. 6% of moderate Mothers expressed uncertainty or disagreement.
- 97% of Mothers who identified as liberal and 98% of Mothers who identified as very liberal agreed with this statement. 2% of liberal and 2% of very liberal Mothers were uncertain.

88% of Mothers believe paid leave should apply to employees regardless of company size, full-time/part-time status, and/ or self-employment status.

Belief	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Strongly Agree	241	78.0%
Agree	30	9.7%
Unsure	21	6.8%
Disagree	11	3.6%
Strongly Disagree	6	1.9%
	309	100.0%

On the above item, the majority of mothers – regardless of political ideology – agreed with this issue; however, there was variation within each political ideology and particularly, a conservative split between conservative and very conservative members with conservative Mothers more likely than very conservative Mothers to support this provision.

- 80% of Mothers who identified as conservative agreed with this issue and 57% of conservative Mothers supported this issue. In contrast, 20% of conservative Mothers and 43% of very conservative Mothers were uncertain or disagreed with this statement.
- 87% of Mothers who identified as moderate agreed with this statement. 13% of moderate Mothers expressed uncertainty or disagreement.
- 93% of Mothers who identified as liberal and 91% of Mothers who identified as very liberal agreed with this statement. 7% of very liberal Mothers and 9% of liberal Mothers expressed uncertainty or disagreement.

96% of Mothers believe employees who have worked for more than 90 days at the same job should be able to return to their jobs after paid leave and without retaliation from employers.

Belief	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Strongly Agree	267	86.4%
Agree	30	9.7%
Unsure	8	2.6%
Disagree	2	0.7%
Strongly Disagree	2	0.7%
	309	100.0%

On the above item, the trend showed that overwhelmingly, Mothers largely agreed - regardless of their political ideologies. For example,

- 100% of Mothers who identified as conservative and 86% who identified as very conservative were uncertain or disagreed with this issue. 14% of very conservative mothers were disagreed with this statement.
- 99% of Mothers who identified as moderate agreed with this statement. 1% of moderate Mothers expressed uncertainty.
- 96% of Mothers who identified as liberal and 96% of Mothers who identified as very liberal agreed with this statement. 4% of liberal and 5% of very liberal Mothers expressed uncertainty or disagreement.

89% of Mothers believe The "FAMILY Act" will (or would have had) a positive impact on their families.

Belief	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Strongly Agree	238	77.0%
Agree	38	12.3%
Unsure	26	8.4%
Disagree	4	1.3%
Strongly Disagree	3	1.0%
	309	100.0%

For the above item, Mothers across the political spectrum supported this item with very strong support from all but very conservative Mothers.

- 88% of Mothers who identified as conservative and 57% of very conservative supported the Family Act. 12% of conservative Mothers and 43% of very conservative mothers were uncertain or disagreed with supporting the FAMILY Act.
- 90% of Mothers who identified as moderate agreed with this statement. 10% of moderate Mothers expressed uncertainty or disagreement with the FAMILY Act.
- 93% of Mothers who identified as liberal and 95% of Mothers who identified as very liberal agreed with this statement. 7% of liberal Mothers and 5% of very liberal Mothers expressed uncertainty or disagreement with the FAMILY Act.

Political Ideology Question

In the overall sample, 37% of Mothers identify as Liberal while 29% of Mothers identify as Moderate and 8% of Mothers identify as Conservative. On either of the political ideology spectrum, Mothers who were Very Liberal accounted for 19% of the sample while Mothers who were Very Conservative represented 4% of the sample.

Count on Mothers is committed to representing Mothers of all political ideologies on issues so that Congress can be informed. We look to national data to see how comparable the range of political ideology is in our sample.

While no national data was found on mothers' political ideologies, the closest data reflects women's political ideologies. According to the Gallup Poll (2021), 29% of women identified as Liberal, 37% of women identified as Moderate, and 32% of women identified as Conservative. Count on Mothers will continue to recruit Mothers to complete our surveys in order for our sample to closely mirror national trends.

	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Very Liberal	57	18.6%
Liberal	114	37.1%
Moderate	90	29.3%
Conservative	23	7.5%
Very Conservative	13	4.2%
Other	10	3.3%
	307	100.0%

State of Residence Question

Mothers reside in 41 states. The states that have the most representation are California (48), Florida (39), New York (21), Virginia (17), North Carolina (15), Illinois (12), Texas (11), and Wisconsin (11).

Future Legislative Focus

These two additional top legislative issues should be the focus of future Count on Mothers' surveys.

- Child Care
- Gun Control and Violence

Qualitative Study Summary

Methodology

Qualitative research is research in which data is provided in words, and then, themes are examined from a review of transcripts. In September 2023, Count on Mothers' Founder and Executive Director Jenny Bransford interviewed five mothers about their opinions on the FAMILY Act. The interviews held were five separate interviews. All five mothers provided their consent to be interviewed and for transcripts of the interviews to be analyzed. Names were removed from the report to protect mothers' identities. This method does not assume generalizability to all mothers.

Sample

The five mothers ranged in age from 37 to 51 and had an average of 2 children. Two identified as conservative, two identified as liberal, and one identified as moderate. The mothers resided, respectively, in four different states and Washington, DC.

Interview Guide

An interview guide is a list of questions that an interviewer uses in qualitative research to prompt responses from the participants. The following interview guide was used by the interviewer with additional questions asked in each interview to follow the organic nature of each interview.

1. Will you introduce yourself? How many kids do you have, where do you live, and how would you describe yourself as a mother?
2. What are your overall thoughts about the bill? (interviewer reviews specific bill components as necessary).
3. If this bill was passed, how would it impact your kids or your family life (life at home, stress, safety/health, ability to thrive, etc.)?
4. Is there anything else you'd like to add before we end the interview?

Data Analysis

The transcripts were analyzed for themes by the Director of Policy and Research. Themes were listed as a theme if at least three of the five mothers' responses supported such a theme. Participants' self-identified political ideology and age are included within the quotes.

Themes

Balancing Caregiving and Working

Participants cited specific challenges associated with balancing caregiving and working.

So to just kind of get closer to 12 (referring to FAMILY Act, would be good)...I used up every vacation day. every single sick day. And I think we all know that at least parents, caregivers need sick days. That's something that babies get sick, people get sick that you should have. And we shouldn't have to kind of be piecing things together. This should just be a given. So I think it is, it would have changed my life, would have made it much easier. And I do think a lot of parts of this bill are so wonderful and things that have been improved upon past versions. (41, Liberal)

So I think just the stress of the world made people even that much more callous towards me in terms of how much time I was going to take, when I was going to come back...The first child I had six weeks, I was asked to come back in four weeks. Can you believe that? (51, Moderate)

[When] you have small children. I just think...it would be so hard. I know lots of women do it. I just don't think I could do it. I don't know how they do. (Conservative, 40)

What, what my institution gave me was kind of the FMLA thing, which was the first two weeks you use up all of your paid time off, then the next four to six weeks or two, three to six weeks were short-term disability, which was paid at 60%. And then anything leftover, if you had any PTO left, pay time off left, that would go toward it. And then after that, it was unpaid. So starting off, I didn't have the ability to even go that full 12 weeks, certainly not paid. We scrambled it together, but I remember even the pressure of being pregnant, knowing I had to save every hour for this baby. I talked about in one of the reels that I posted on Instagram about vomiting in a trash can every day in between clients during my pregnancy in the first trimester, rather than taking sick time, you know, I was really ill. I'd felt like I couldn't even take that time off, right? Trying to sneak to OB appointments in, you know, wherever I could because I needed to save all of that time. So that obviously was not a great experience. And then postpartum, I think one of the hardest parts for me personally in my transition as a mother, was feeling forced to put both my babies in daycare at 12 weeks. (Liberal, 40)

And going back to work was... You know, it was mixed. It was like in some way I was kind of like I create that routine and that normalcy again. And then in other ways, you know, it's different now. You have a kid and so your mind is not the same as it was [if] my mind had been completely rewired, So it was a struggle to go back. And I've had 12 weeks and you know, I would have liked maybe a little bit longer. I think some women want to go back at 8 to 12 weeks and someone will want to take six months off and ...I think that's great. I think we should somehow again be able to have those options ...and it...depends on organization and state level and now this kind of federal law like this. So for me, it was, I think, a nice middle ground. I wouldn't say it was awful going back, but it wasn't like easy street either. (Conservative, 37).

This theme extended to new mothers' health needs cited by at least two participants.

It's about the health of the mother, which...actually is getting worse and worse in this country. I'm sure folks have seen the maternal mortality rate has doubled in the last 20 years, which is unconscionable. [A] growing crisis that we need to do something about...This [the bill] is just something that everyone is going to need at some point in their lives, probably many times in their lives. (Liberal, 41)

Well, I mean, yes. We are looking at a maternity, morbidity, and mortality crisis in the United States of America. It's a crisis. And when we know that women of color are dying at ... three to six to nine times the number of women who are white just by virtue of the fact that they're pregnant. For all women, this is essential. No one should die because they're pregnant. But we know that the reasons often why are because they're undiagnosed, underlying preexisting conditions. There's a lot of food, transportation, you know, insecurities so you can't get to the doctor. There's just so many reasons why if you have time where you can be with your children, have resources to have child care to go to the doctor, you don't have to miss visits, postpartum complications...if you have the freedom to be able to go to your doctor's appointments, so on and so forth. It's just It's so obvious to me that part of the reason why women are dying because they're pregnant is because they can't even get to the doctor and nobody knows. (Moderate, 51)

Recognition of Privilege with Working and Raising Children

Participants discussed their appreciation with the privilege of private resources (relatives, finances) that allowed them to balance work and raising a family.

Yeah, my five year old is in kindergarten. He starts in a few weeks. And then my three year old is in preschool three days a week, but my in-laws are their caregivers for when they're not in school. So I'm very blessed. Honestly, I think if I didn't have family that was able to take care of my kids, it would make working a really hard decision for me. (Conservative, 40)

I have an eight-year-old son who is a true delight. Could not quite ++say the same when he was a baby. He was really difficult. He had really bad colic. For all the moms who are familiar with that out there, which was in our case, he didn't sleep for nearly a year. And it really took him until he was about seven to even sleep alone through the night. So it really opened my eyes to what being a mother can actually mean in real life, what the postpartum experience is, and kept thinking if it's this hard for me with the resources that I have, what about so many of the women...who give birth in this country? (Liberal, 41)

And I was fortunate enough, we asked my parents for some support to get me to 12 weeks. This was early on in my career. I hadn't really established a lot of savings. And so that's a privilege, right? To be able to have a family who could help with that. So...many people don't have that and having any kind of... financial support is going to make out all of the difference as far as like survival, you know, because things are so expensive. (Liberal, 40)

When I had my son, my first child, I was asked actually to come back early from maternity leave...So I just powered through. I had some great support from my father. A decent amount of support from my husband, but you know, he was working too. So I did nannies and childcare and all kinds of other stuff in order to patch times when I wasn't home. (Moderate, 51)

Evaluating FAMILY ACT

Participants mostly believed that the FAMILY Act should become a benefit though offered ideas for the particulars of the bill regarding specifics on coverage and implementation. They all supported the idea of broader inclusivity.

Importance of Inclusive Coverage

Participants provided broad support for the inclusivity of the coverage relating to leave and helping relatives with health issues.

... I love the idea of this. I think that there is something here. I think a lot, most mothers would agree, whether it be for childcare purposes after birth or...maternity leave, or taking care of elderly parents. (Conservative, 37)

[If] this is really more like a short-term disability policy kind of thing, or how it would actually apply outside of maternity care or paternity care, whatever the umbrella is, it seems like a small investment for a huge benefit across the board for everyone. (Moderate, 51)

I also love that it has what we call an inclusive definition of family... meaning it is not just about, again, parents or babies or immediate nuclear family, but it's about caring for our loved ones... I love that it covers everyone. I love that they do think about how to make sure the lowest wage workers can get by on that paycheck. (Liberal, 41).

I also know there's people that have kids with serious health conditions or parents who had a surgery and they need to be caretaking their parent for two, three weeks, then I think something like this could be helpful for them. (Conservative, 40)

[It] seems like it's getting some of the people who aren't typically captured in some of the better policies, right. (Liberal, 40)

Participants had many other ideas when evaluating the FAMILY Act. Some of these ideas are below.

12 weeks really isn't enough I think. I don't think it goes far enough. But right now... some folks don't even have that, right? And some folks have two weeks off. And that's obviously, it should be obvious. It's obvious for anyone who's ever been a mother that...it's not acceptable. But the idea of having some sort of paid, even if it's partially, like that's better, right? So we're moving the needle in the right direction as far as I'm concerned. But I mean, I think we should be going for six months to a year, honestly, which would be comparable to other countries. (Liberal, 40).

My concern with having a program run by the government, a benefit that is received by everyone, is that there are a lot of companies now that offer this as a benefit. And would those companies then take that away? I think I noticed in the language it said, like if your company already provides this, then you don't get it. But I mean, if I'm a company, I'm thinking, well then I'll just not offer that benefit anymore. And then I also think about, since I worked in a small business environment for over 10 years and grew up, my dad and my aunt, both on small businesses, grew up seeing the perspective of business owner and how much that impacts. When I say small businesses, I think that the definition is under 100 employees. I consider small business like 10 employees. When you have such a small team, having someone be out for such a long time is really difficult. I just think that there's not necessarily a one size fits all policy. I mean even FMLA is what over 50 employees. I think is what it's required. So it's such hard with something like this like the Family Act I just have so many conflicting thoughts about it because yes, but again, those are women working part time. They're not in a full time job. Maybe they haven't worked there for 90 days. And so I don't know that this policy would support that particular situation. (Conservative, 40).

I think it's great. I just worry about the implications and what comes when you apply things that look good on paper to real life.... I think this is where there's room for improvement with this bill, whether it be through...conference committee. I mean, if chambers pass it or just thoughtfully amending it. But things like that, like carving out, understanding that not everybody works for a major corporation, right? I work for a really small organization. We only have like 45 employees. So we are much different than my past employer who was...you know, manufacturing corporation that had 15,000 employees. Those are night and day different. And so what works for that corporation is not going to work for this organization, the organization I'm currently with. And I think stuff like that needs to be taken into account...and then also, as I mentioned, people that are self-employed, small business owners that have, you know, five, 10 employees and are just trying to be able to pay everybody every month. I think that there needs to be special consideration for people in those positions. Because again, the idea is something I think that everyone can get behind. The compassion that's behind it, the understanding that's the catalyst here makes sense to everybody. It's just that real world economics and real life just don't always play out so nicely. And so I think that, thoughtfully...amending this or changing it, editing it to reflect different types of employment, I think would be a good change. (Conservative, 37)

So paying into it, I absolutely believe we all should pay into something that benefits all. But if you're saying that there's even yet another benefit, you know, if it's affecting...communities. I think we should all be paying into it. (Moderate, 51)

... I've supported a number of ways of funding this. It was different when under the Biden proposal, there's this payroll contribution for the social insurance model. To be honest with you, I support all of them. I think the most important thing is getting this done. But certainly, I haven't heard many people complain about the modest contributions into social security. I think it's something that people feel very attached to, feel is very necessary and they're protective of. I think that when we pass this, people will feel similarly, that it is a tiny contribution, it's less than a cup of coffee, whatever else you can think of, that in the end will save people's lives and save their finances. And help prepare also just for things, you know, it is truly insurance. It's preparing for things you both plan and things that you can't plan for. And make sure that families will float instead of sink....I do love, I think it's really important that it covers, as you said, part-time workers, self-employed people, freelancers. That's just the nature of work. It's the nature of the economy. It's what more and more people are living. It's important that this is truly universal and applies to everybody. (Liberal, 41)

Need for U.S. to Change Paradigm on Paid Leave

Participants shared that the United States needs to shift its paradigm on paid leave - although recognizing this will be a slow process.

[The FAMILY Act bill] kind of changes the mindset of people around you that this is just the way that it is. Sort of like FMLA, you know? It's federal, you know, it's something that's expected. It's an expected way we're supposed to treat each other with humanity rather than, oh, I have a good job with good benefits, but you don't. (Moderate, 51)

It's something that we should have had a long time ago, something the rest of the world has had. It's us and I think six countries with no form of paid leave. So this to me is one of the most important things Congress can do and I hope that they do very soon. (Liberal, 41)

I do think that, yes, if you have institutional change and it's kind of... I hate to use this word, but forced from the government onto companies and organizations to expect this, to know that this is happening, this is how things operate now. I do think that over time, it's not gonna be right away because people's minds don't change right away. But I do think that over years, the expectation that people have people to care for, whether it's an infant or parents or...sick kids or whatever, that there is more compassion, that taking time off to take care of people in your life is okay. And that's good and it's valuable and it's to be respected. (Conservative, 37)

So I want progress when it comes to paid parental leave. We are so far behind, as you know, the rest of the world regarding offering what I think is a human right, a right to bond postpartum with your baby, with your family, figure out how to do things like nursing if that's what you're doing or feeding in general and sleep, all this. And so I think that's a human right. I think right now what we're doing without having a federal paid leave is frankly inhumane. I think it's actually, it's barbaric right, what we put mothers and families through. So to me I think we have a long way to go. (Liberal, 40)

I do think we need to support parents in the workforce absolutely. I think we need to have policies in this country that support motherhood that support families but at the same time I have these principles of limited government, of wanting people to do things on their own, and like the two conflict with each other on this particular thing. And so I don't know what the right answer is. I don't know how best to do this. I do know that we need to do something as a country, because I know there's also women who are lower income and they're single moms. you know, a few part-time jobs, they're patching together and they don't get any benefits and they're going back to work two days after they have a baby and that is not right. (Conservative, 40)