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Testimony Re: H-5781, Temporary Caregivers Insurance
House Labor Committee
March 1, 2023
Leanne Barrett, Senior Policy Analyst

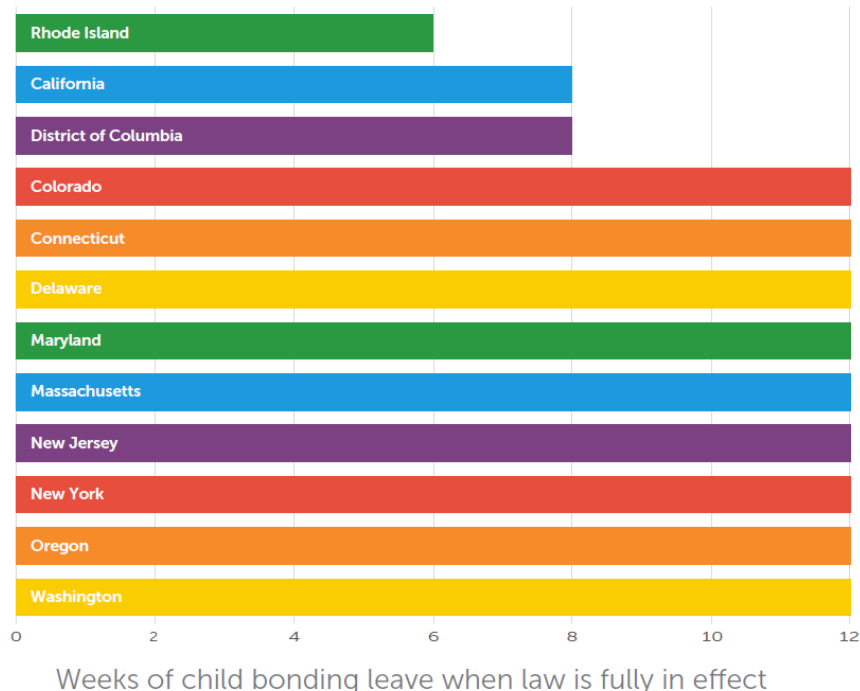


Rhode Island KIDS COUNT coordinates the Right from the Start Campaign, a state policy coalition led by eight organizations to advance state policies and budget priorities that will help families with young children.

Both Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and the Right from the Start Campaign strongly support Rep. Kazarian’s proposal to add 6 additional weeks to the Temporary Caregivers Insurance Program to bring us up to the 12-week standard adopted by 9 other states (including both Connecticut and Massachusetts) of at least 12 weeks of paid family leave to care for new babies and newly adopted and foster children.

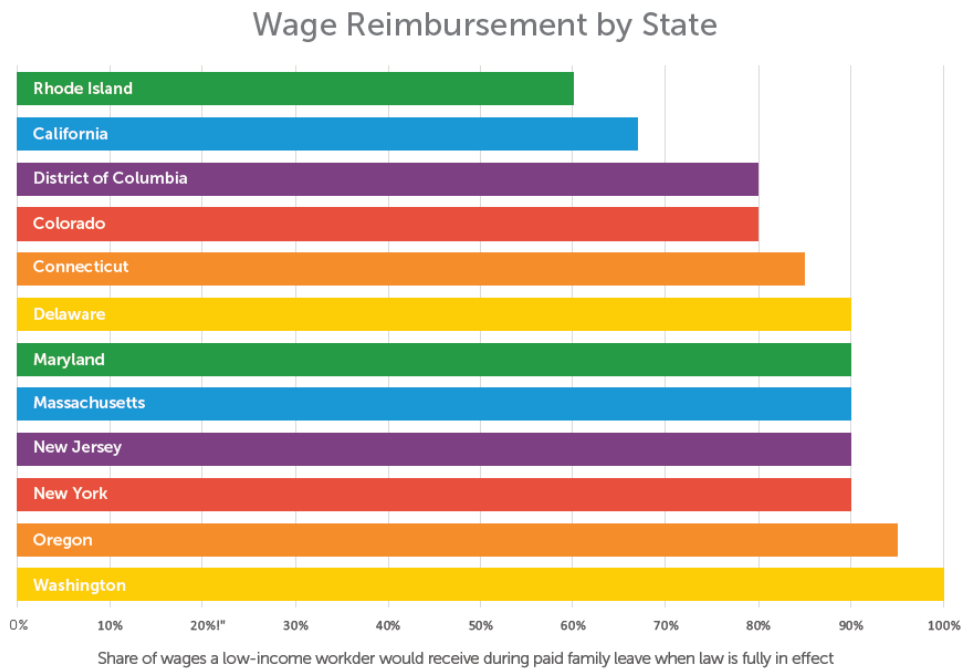
Rhode Island offers the shortest paid family leave in U.S. Rhode Island’s TCI provides a maximum of 6 weeks of paid family leave. This is the shortest length of any paid family leave policy in the country and **significantly less than the minimum 12 weeks of leave that researchers and medical professionals recommend** for new parents.

Adding 6 additional weeks would help many families. However, the lowest wage workers in the state often cannot take the leave they need and that they contribute to because they cannot afford basic living expenses without their full paycheck.



Rhode Island's wage replacement during paid family leave is the lowest in U.S. Rhode Island's TCI wage replacement is currently at 60%, meaning that workers only receive up to 60% of their regular pay when on leave. This wage replacement is the lowest amongst all paid family leave policies in the country. **Expenses increase significantly when a new baby or child joins a family**, and families need their full paycheck to cover both their regular living expenses and to meet the needs of a baby.

Rhode Island is falling behind as other states raise wage reimbursement standards



Access to Rhode Island's paid family leave program is not equitable when low-wage workers cannot afford to take time off.

Taking at least 12 weeks of time off from work to care for a new child improves both short-term and long-term maternal and child health outcomes and family economic outcomes. **Research shows that when fathers take parental leave, it helps improve the health of mothers and increases their lifetime labor force participation and earnings.**

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT thanks the General Assembly for your efforts to ensure Rhode Island remains a leader in the nation in helping families.