



African American
Health Program
Executive Committee

June 10, 2022

Dear Councilmember Friedson:

The African American Health Program (AAHP) Executive Committee applauds you for shining the light on the need to have paid parental leave for County employees. The **Paid Parental Leave Act**, which will serve as a supplement until the State Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program takes effect in 2025, is an excellent gap measure. The **Right to Nourish Act**, for lactation room(s) in County buildings, will be extremely beneficial for moms or “birthing people”, who breastfeed, since it will provide them with a private space to pump and allow for reasonable breaks so that they can pump.

Having parental leave will be a key benefit to balancing family and work. We recently reviewed a study by Dr. Bahira Sherif Trask, who is an expert specializing in globalization, family and personal relationships and work-life issues. Dr. Trask has also written several books on work and family life. In the study by Dr. Trask (2017), it was found that an unpaid leave policy has negative health challenges for a new mom and baby. The study by Dr. Trask (2017) further revealed that paid medical leave has proven to be a contributor to higher birth weight babies and lower infant mortality. AAHP feels this is critical since Black babies are at highest risk for infant mortality and low birth weight babies are one of the main reasons that Black babies die. In addition, it has been proven that when a paid leave policy is in effect, employers benefit from “lower rate of employee turnover, and a more productive and loyal staff” (Trask, 2017, p.3). In states (e.g., California, Rhode Island, and New Jersey), where paid medical leave is mandated, many employers have enjoyed cost savings and have not experienced abuses of the system (Trask, 2017, p. 3).

There are many benefits to breastfeeding. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2021), breastfeeding is the “best source of nutrition for most babies, supports a baby’s growth and development, and protects the baby and mom against certain illnesses and diseases”. The health benefits for moms/birthing people are major since breastfeeding reduces the mother’s risk of breast and ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure (CDC, 2021). The African American Health Program (AAHP) is a strong proponent of breastfeeding. AAHP’s registered nurses are certified lactation specialists. At every encounter, the AAHP nurses educate mothers on the benefits of breastfeeding and encourage the moms to breastfeed their infants for as long as possible.

Other considerations

- President Biden has replaced the terminology, “pregnant mothers”, with “birthing people” in his 2022 budget proposal in order to be more inclusive of all genders who birth babies (Office of Management and Budget, 2022). The language is also in the 2023 budget.
- Montgomery County has a growing older adult population. Paid parental leave should also benefit those who are caregivers and care for elderly parents, elderly spouses, and other elderly family members.

Thank you so much for your sponsorship of these important bills, which are needed.

Sincerely,

Jacquelyn Williams, Co-Chair
African American Health Program, Executive Committee

References

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