

AARP New York  
Capital District Labor Religion Coalition  
Catholic Charities' Commission on Peace and Justice  
Citizen Action of New York  
Early Care & Learning Council  
Labor Religion Coalition of New York State  
League of Women Voters of New York State  
National Alliance on Mental Illness-New York State  
New York Civil Liberties Union Capital Region Chapter  
New York State Alliance for Retired Americans  
New York State Nurses Association  
Northeastern New York Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health  
Statewide Senior Action

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Contacts: (AARP) Erik Kriss, 518-360-9213, [ekriss@aarp.org](mailto:ekriss@aarp.org)  
Thursday, December 17, 2015 Donna Liquori, 518-852-9150, [dliquori@aarp.org](mailto:dliquori@aarp.org)

## **Unprecedented Array of Groups Urge Cuomo to Lead on Family Leave Insurance**

*Cost-Effective Plan Could Benefit Caregivers for Elderly and Mentally  
Ill, Parents of Newborns, Employers, Taxpayers*

**ALBANY, N.Y.** – An unprecedented, multi-generational and diverse array of groups joined today to highlight the benefits of family leave insurance and to urge Governor Andrew Cuomo to lead on the issue during the upcoming 2016 state legislative session.

Family leave insurance would provide working New Yorkers with up to 12 weeks of partially paid time off each year to care for a newborn or sick family member or to accommodate the military requirements of a family member.

The plan would benefit a broad cross-section of New Yorkers, from a young parent caring for a newborn to a Baby Boomer or Gen-Xer caring for an aging parent suffering from Alzheimer's.

The plan the 13 groups are supporting would be administered through the state's 65-year-old Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) system, thus creating no administrative changes for businesses or expansion of government bureaucracy. The proposal would add paid family leave to what could be covered by TDI in New York, just as California, New Jersey and Rhode Island have successfully done.

The groups gathered at the State Capitol complex today to call for family leave insurance.

Beth Finkel, State Director of **AARP** in New York State, said, “AARP is calling on Governor Cuomo to lead and include a family leave insurance proposal in his 2016 agenda. Family leave insurance is both compassionate and cost-effective; we believe it would help employees, employers and taxpayers by fostering more productive workplaces and giving workers the economic peace of mind they need to provide invaluable care for their loved ones – which helps New Yorkers age with dignity and independence at home, rather than in far more costly and mostly taxpayer-funded nursing homes.”

Walter C. Ayres, Director of **Catholic Charities’ Commission on Peace and Justice**, said, “Public policy should protect those who have to take time away from their jobs to handle serious family responsibilities. Such legislation will help family life and send a message that children and families are real priorities within our society.”

Ivette Alfonso, President of **Citizen Action of New York**, said, “Choosing to care for a loved one shouldn’t mean financial ruin, but without paid family leave, too many New York families are faced with that possibility. Until New York’s leaders pass paid family leave, our economy and communities will be held back.”

Jessica Klos Shapiro, Director of Policy and Community Education for the **Early Care & Learning Council**, said, “Studies show that early bonding with parents lays the foundation for children to have good long-term health and overall well-being. When mothers are not offered family leave insurance they are more likely to give up breastfeeding earlier, delay infant immunizations, experience financial hardship, and experience postpartum depression. Having both parents in the workplace has become increasingly common, and without family leave insurance the children and families of New York State are being short-changed on their capacity to form critical emotional attachments that provide for success later in life.”

Barbara Thomas, Women’s Issues Specialist for the **League of Women Voters of New York State**, said, “Caregiving falls disproportionately on the shoulders of women, whether it is caring for infants and young children or spouses and the elderly. Without paid family leave insurance a woman loses her income just when her family could use it most, and her sacrifices also have repercussions on the high rate of poverty that women face in retirement.”

Matthew Shapiro, Public Engagement Coordinator for the **National Alliance on Mental Illness-New York State**, said, “Increasing family involvement in the recovery process from chronic mental illness has been central to NAMI-NYS’s mission since our inception more than 30 years ago. This is why we believe it is vital for New York to enact a family leave insurance which would eliminate a major barrier to family participation in supporting and advancing a loved one’s recovery. We know that the best recovery outcomes happen when people living with a chronic illness, their family and their doctors work together as a team. This is why we urge Governor Cuomo to make it easier for families to be a part of the recovery team by including family leave insurance in his Executive Budget.”

Melanie Trimble, Chapter Director of the **New York Civil Liberties Union Capital Region Chapter**, said, “The NYCLU stands firmly behind paid family leave. It is time to provide New Yorkers with the insurance to care for family members in times of stress.”

Barry A. Kaufmann, President of the **New York State Alliance for Retired Americans**, said, “The 440,000 members of the NYS Alliance for Retired Americans are proud to support the passage of paid family leave insurance in New York State. Through the implementation of family leave insurance, senior citizens can be secure in the knowledge that their family can assist in caring for an ill or dying parent without having to make the choice between that parent and financial ruin. Not only is it the right thing to do and makes economic sense, but it would require no new fiscal demands on business or the government. A modest increase in the employee contribution to the already existing Temporary Disability Insurance program would fully fund the legislation. It seems to be a no brainer for New York to continue its heritage of being in the forefront of changes that enable workers to put family first by passing family leave insurance NOW.”

Jill Furillo, RN, Executive Director of the **New York State Nurses Association**, said, “No New York worker should be forced to choose between their family and their paycheck. Paid family leave is both crucial to a healthy society and financially viable. And during tough economic times, paid family leave provides a vital safety net for the working families that need it the most.”

Matt London of the **Northeastern New York Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health** said, “NENYCOSH urges the Governor to include provisions for paid family leave in this year's budget. This will provide the desperately needed support for working families so they do not need to choose between their or their loved ones' care or work.”

A series of MetLife studies dramatically illustrates how the current system burdens both employees and employers because of family caregiving responsibilities:

- American [employers lose over \\$33 billion a year in productivity](#) because of employees' caregiving obligations (2006 study).
- American [employers potentially spend an extra \\$13.4 billion a year](#) on health care costs for caregiving employees - typically 8% more than for non-caregivers (2010 study).
- [The average caregiver loses over \\$300,000](#), conservatively, in wages, pension and Social Security benefits as a result of caregiving responsibilities (2011 study).

AARP believes family leave insurance would help working New Yorkers concentrate on the job when on the job, lessening the likelihood that employers will lose productivity and have to pay higher health costs and that family caregivers will leave the workforce or lose badly-needed income.

####