

Health Policy Presentation: A Policy on Paid Maternity Leave in the United States



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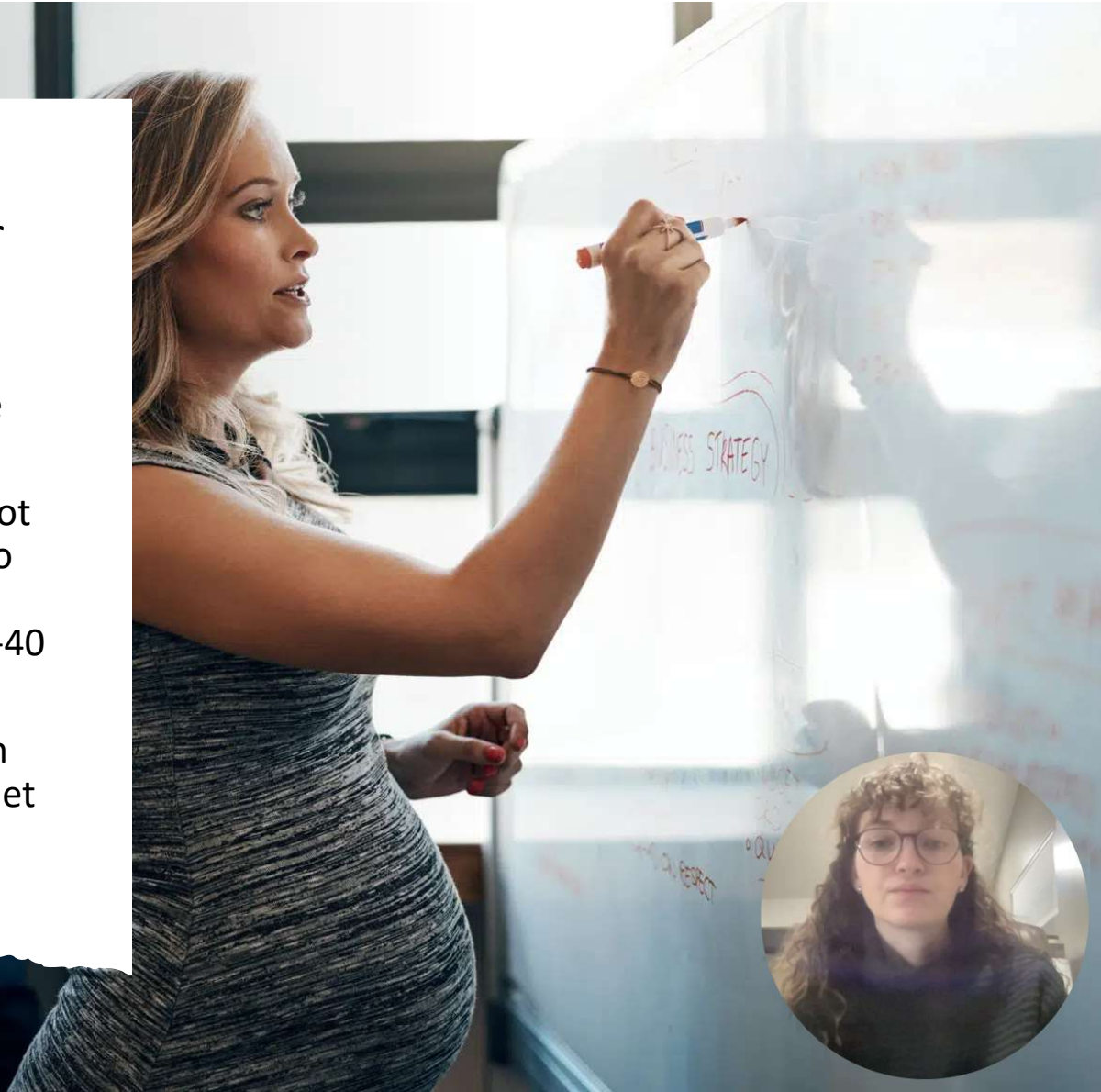
Introduction

- The U.S. remains one of six countries with no national policy on paid maternity leave.
- FMLA is a federal law that requires larger organizations to offer 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a new child.
- 27 states offer more expansive standards of paid parental leave
- The average paid maternity leave found by the OECD family database is 19 weeks maternity leave.



The gap in caring for working women

- Only 59% of U.S. workers are eligible for FMLA (Van Niel et al., 2020)
- 23% of female employees who did not have access to paid leave returned to work within 10 days of giving birth, additionally 22% returned within 11-40 days (Van Niel et al., 2020)
- 24% of women exit the labor force in their 1st year of motherhood (Torres et al., 2024)



Benefits literature has found with the paid maternity leave:

- Positive mental and physical effects for mother and baby (Eaves & Schindler-Ruwisch, 2022)
- Increased initiation and duration of breastfeeding, specifically exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life (Majhi et al., 2021)
- Decrease in postpartum depression and intimate partner violence (Van Niel et al., 2020)
- Improvement of infant attachment and child development (Eaves & Schindler-Ruwisch, 2022)



Health Policy Paper



Purpose: comprehensive paper including background of the problem, current climate in legislation/lobbying, and discussion.



Key messages: evidence based research behind the importance of maternity leave, specifically paid; and examples of what this could look like at a federal and state level



Format and Delivery Method: Scholarly Paper



Strengths: paper representing high quality evidence, comprehensive information



Weaknesses: Too descriptive, difficulty to use in accessibility of quick information.

Policy Brief



Purpose: brief summary that focuses on context of a health policy and recommended actions



Key messages: Included a map showing the U.S. being one of the only countries without a national paid maternity leave policy; research supports 6 months of leave for mothers; where to start



Format and Delivery Method: 1-2 page concise summary of a health policy; can be left behind for a legislator



Strengths: charming way of presentation; concise but inclusive, attention grabbing.



Weaknesses: Not as detailed in a plan for action leading to questioning of the policy itself

Opinion Editorial



Purpose: To inform the public of the need for paid maternity leave



Key messages: Enacting the Montana Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act is achievable as evidenced by other states.



Format and Delivery Method: Brief essay with opinion used within a format to reach more people (ie newspaper)



Strengths: able to include personal voice and passion; encouraged awareness of the subject; encourages individuals to act



Weaknesses: needs to be basic and not in-depth with word restriction

Legislative Testimony



Purpose: educate policymakers of the impact a policy like this could have at a state level- in this case Montana



Key messages: : Other countries invest into their mothers/families, other states support and have implemented like-bills.



Format and Delivery Method: With the opportunity, this would have been done in person. Was professionally delivered. Included personal experience in New Zealand



Strengths: Illustrated what a bill like this could do for a state on a personal level while highlighting opposing thoughts.



Weaknesses: delivery method is meant to be brief, difficult to support side



Reflection & Where to go from here

- The compendium brings it all together.
- Past experience: exposure to a country and a workplace that supports its mothers in New Zealand
- Future goal: continue to educate women on the importance of taking time off, fighting for this support by their employer, and standing up for the importance of family within this country.

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