



Expand family leave and protect pregnant and nursing employees from discrimination in the workplace

HF2371 (Kahn)/SF1956 (Sieben)
HF2259 (Yarusso)/SF2000 (Sheran)

- Expand unpaid leave under the Minnesota Parental Leave Act from 6 to 12 weeks and allow use of leave under the Parental Leave Act for pregnancy-related needs
- Add pregnancy to the Minnesota Parental Leave Act
- Require employers to provide reasonable accommodations for pregnant employees such as more frequent water breaks, use of a stool, or transfer to a less strenuous position
- Provide enforcement of workplace protections for nursing mothers who need to express breast milk during unpaid break times

The Facts

- Working mothers in Minnesota are increasingly the primary breadwinners in their families. In 1980, 66 percent of women in Minnesota participated in the labor force. In 2010, 84 percent of Minnesota women in their early thirties – including many mothers – were working or seeking work. **The workforce participation of mothers with children under six in Minnesota is 79 percent.**
- **More than 37 million employees in smaller firms are excluded from the federal Family and Medical Leave Act.**
- Minnesota currently requires employers to provide up to six weeks of unpaid parental leave upon the birth or adoption of a child to employees in businesses with between 21 or more employees. **Expanding this leave to twelve weeks and allowing pregnant women to use leave for prenatal care or incapacity due to pregnancy enhances the economic security of working families.**
- When working women become mothers, they often experience discrimination in the workplace based on stereotypical assumptions. Although women without children on average earn 7 percent less than their male counterparts, **women with children earn 23 percent less.**
- Pregnant women in need of accommodation often never ask their employers for the minor adjustments they need on the job. **A recent survey found that 71 percent of women reported needing more frequent breaks at work when they became pregnant, yet 42 percent never asked their employers to accommodate them, possibly out of fear or repercussions, refusal, or uncertainty about how their request would be received.**
- Minnesota law already requires employers to provide a nursing mother with reasonable unpaid break time and a private space to express breast milk for her child. **Yet lack of enforcement mechanisms means some Minnesota new moms are losing their jobs** when they ask their employers to follow the law.

Helping women and men balance family and work responsibilities not only makes for healthier, happier families but reduces costly turnover and increases productivity.