



New York City Comptroller
Scott M. Stringer

NEWS

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COMPTROLLER STRINGER: NEW YORKERS NEED FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE POLICIES

Survey of over 1,100 New Yorkers finds nearly half don't have access to Flexible Work Arrangements

80 percent support Paid Family Leave

Roughly one-third of shift workers report retaliation for requesting schedule changes

(New York, NY) – New Yorkers need policies that would help them balance work and family responsibilities, according to a report released today by New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer, in partnership with A Better Balance. The report, “Families and Flexibility: Building the 21st Century Workplace,” is based on a survey of more than 1,100 New Yorkers working in a broad range of industries and provides a follow up to Comptroller Stringer’s report, “Families and Flexibility,” from June 2014.

The online survey, while not scientific, asked workers in all five boroughs about:

- The availability of flexible work arrangements;
- How comfortable they are requesting flexible schedules;
- The need for paid family leave; and
- For “shift workers,” the predictability of their work schedules.

“No New Yorker should *ever* have to choose between keeping their job and caring for their family,” said Comptroller Stringer. “With policies like FlexTime, paid family leave, and advanced notification of schedules, we can give workers the tools they need to address their personal and professional responsibilities.”

For a video on family-friendly workplace policies, please click [here](#).

The Continued Case for Right to Request Legislation and Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexible work arrangements, which allow employees to work outside the traditional 9-to-5 schedule and from locations other than their offices, are one of the most effective ways to help

individuals establish a work-life balance. Flexible work arrangements also help businesses boost their bottom line by improving morale and minimizing turnover.

But, nearly half of workers surveyed do not have access to flexible work arrangements.

Just as troubling, respondents who had requested flexible work arrangements in the past reported that they had experienced missed promotions, negative reviews, and belittling comments.

Among respondents without office-wide policies on flexible scheduling:

- 59% were “uncomfortable” or “very uncomfortable” asking for FlexTime; and
- 71% said they would be more likely to ask for flexibility if everyone in their workplace had the right to request it.

People who did have flexible work arrangements reported that it allowed them to better manage their lives. For example, one respondent was able to complete a Master’s program thanks to FlexTime, while another was able to care for her father during the last six weeks of his life without worrying about losing her job.

Comptroller Stringer calls on Congress to pass the Flexibility for Working Families Act and on Albany and City Hall to enact local “right-to-request” laws

These laws – which are sponsored by Representative Carolyn Maloney in Congress and Assemblywoman Nily Rozic and State Senator Daniel Squadron in Albany – would create a framework for employees to discuss FlexTime with their bosses without fear of retaliation.

“New Yorkers shouldn’t be intimidated or fearful when asking for flexibility in their schedules,” Comptroller Stringer said. “That’s why it is critical that we pass ‘right-to-request’ legislation which would enable employees to discuss FlexTime without fear of retaliation. New Yorkers should be able to take their son to the doctor, pick their daughter up from school, or care for their elderly parents without having to worry about their jobs.”

Paid Family Leave: A Policy to Support 21st Century Families

The Comptroller’s survey also found strong support for paid family leave, which allows new parents to bond with their children and provides support for individuals caring for sick family members:

- 80% of respondents support a paid family leave system funded by a small employee payroll deduction, as state legislation in Albany has proposed; and
- 86% support equal amounts of paid family leave for both mothers and fathers.

A 2011 study of California’s program by the Center for Economic and Policy Research shows that paid family leave helps employees care for their loved ones, and is also good for business. Over 89% of employers reported it had a “positive effect” or “no noticeable effect” on productivity, profitability, turnover, and employee morale.

Comptroller pushes New York State to pass the Paid Family Leave Insurance Act in lieu of congressional action

This legislation, sponsored by Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan and State Senator Joseph Addabbo, Jr., would create a state-wide paid family leave insurance system, which would be funded by a small employee payroll deduction.

“Two countries in the world don’t have paid family leave: New Guinea and the United States,” the Comptroller said, referring to a study by the International Labor Organization. “That needs to change. Mothers and fathers should have the opportunity to bond with their newborns, and all workers should be able to care for sick family members without fear of losing their job. While this issue should be addressed at the federal level, we can and must take steps now in Albany to support paid family leave for all New Yorkers.”

Stable Schedules: A Building Block for New York City Families

The survey found that among “shift workers,” whose schedules often change week-to-week, 18% receive their schedule only a day in advance, with some respondents reporting that they often don’t know their schedule until the day of—or even *during* their shift.

This uncertainty prevents workers from scheduling day care for their kids, providing elder care for their loved ones, and furthering their own education.

Among these workers:

- Nearly one-fifth receive their schedules a mere 24-hours before their shift begins; and
- Almost one-third reported retaliation after requesting schedule changes.

Comptroller urges City Council to pass a law mandating advance notification of schedules

Such a bill would require employers to provide schedules at least 72 hours in advance.

“Advance notification of schedules isn’t a perk – it’s a basic necessity for millions of Americans who deserve to know when they need to clock in so that they can plan their lives accordingly,” said **Comptroller Stringer**. “Enacting this as standard workplace policy is long overdue.”

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“Now more than ever, so many workers are struggling to juggle the responsibilities of their jobs with the demanding tasks that come with having a family. In a city as high-paced as New York, that battle is only intensified, and no one should be forced to have to ultimately choose between their job and their family. I commend Comptroller Stringer for not only providing us with hard evidence that proves flexible work arrangements really are needed in our city, but for putting

forth recommendations that can help us one day make that a reality,” said **Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.**

“Everyone has the right to strike a balance between work and their personal lives, so they can plan to take care of important issues, including healthcare, education and childcare matters,” said **Senator Jose Peralta**. “Flexible scheduling creates a win-win scenario for both employers and workers. Employees perform at their best when they are free from the worry of finding time to manage all aspects of their personal and professional lives. I want to thank the City Comptroller Scott Stringer for taking an important step towards facilitating the balance between one’s work schedule and one’s private life.”

“With flexible work hours, individuals will no longer have to choose between work and their family,” **State Senator Toby Stavisky** said. “The Comptroller’s findings show how truly beneficial flexible work arrangements can be, not only for the employee, but employers as well. I applaud Comptroller Stringer for advocating for a better work-life balance for city workers.”

"Flexible work schedules are important to allowing parents and families the ability to coordinate and plan," said **State Senator Daniel Squadron**. "I'm proud to carry legislation giving workers the right to request flexible work schedules, as well as better understand the feasibility of broader implementation, along with Assemblymember Rozic. I thank City Comptroller Stringer and colleagues for continued focus on this issue for families."

“*Right to Request* legislation helps hardworking New Yorkers to negotiate non-traditional hours with their employers in order to accommodate their personal needs and ultimately work more effectively and efficiently. Flexible Work Arrangements benefit employees, businesses, and New York City as a whole, and I am proud to support this legislation,” said **Assemblyman Michael DenDekker**.

“New York is moving towards the economy of the future, but in many ways, we’re still operating under the rules of the workplace of the past,” said **Assemblyman Francisco Moya, Chair of the Subcommittee on Workplace Safety**. “Flexible work arrangements give workers, especially single working parents and those who care for elderly relatives, the flexibility they need to prioritize both work and family. New York must create an environment that is as hospitable to working families as possible. I commend Comptroller Scott Stringer for boldly championing the important, but oft-overlooked issue of work-life balance.”

“When a significant portion of the workforce is made up of working parents, caregivers, and students who find themselves unable to achieve work-life balance, we must consider implementing flextime policies that reflect changing workforce dynamics. As the sponsor of 'Right to Request' legislation, I am proud to see us moving in a direction that recognizes the benefits of flexible working arrangements. I thank Comptroller Stringer for his leadership on this issue, and I call on my fellow State Legislators to pass this bill come January,” said **Assemblywoman Nily Rozic**.

"Flex Time presents a great opportunity for the employers and workers of New York City. Not only would flexible work hours allow for employees to meet their obligations outside of the

workplace, but giving them the opportunity to work outside of normal 9 to 5 business hours could greatly reduce traffic congestion during the rush hour commute. Giving working New Yorkers the time to take care of aging relatives as well as their children allows them to meet their own needs and also provides new means to foster greater productivity," said **Assemblyman David Weprin**.

"Hardworking New Yorkers should be given the opportunity of Paid Family Leave. Employees perform their best when they know their employer is on their side and that they and their families are cared for. I thank Comptroller Scott Stringer for conducting this survey and his commitment to creating a fair workplace environment for every working individual," said **City Council Member Elizabeth Crowley**.

"A one-size-fits-all approach to the work day is outmoded and unfair to hardworking New Yorkers who serve as caretakers for elderly, disabled and young family members," said **City Council Member Daniel Dromm**. "I applaud Comptroller Stringer's efforts to revise and reform this outdated model and look forward to working with him to implement his progressive vision for New York City families."

"Comptroller Stringer's report shows the urgent need for action to make sure working New Yorkers have schedules that work for their lives and their families. I was especially struck by the retail worker who said 'There are no words to describe the frustration and anxiety that comes from not knowing my schedule for the next week and the inability to plan my life and finances.' I look forward to supporting legislation that gives hard-working New Yorkers schedules that work," said **City Councilmember Brad Lander**.

"Flexible work arrangements benefit both employers and employees. They allow employers to maximize the productivity of work hours while providing workers with a reasonable work and home life balance. A 21st Century workplace needs this flexibility so company policies can be made to fit the unique circumstances of individual workers and employer settings," said **City Council Member Mark Levine**.

"I believe that we have all at one time or another experienced the unexpected and, as a result, we do whatever is necessary to deal with the situation. Providing New Yorkers with flexibility in their jobs and/or prospect of flexibility would be of great support. Comptroller Stringer is raising awareness around an issue that everyone – employee and employer can relate to." – **City Councilwoman Rosie Mendez**.

"In today's world, many people do not have the same 9-to-5 availability that was common for so long," said **City Council Member Donovan Richards**. "With the amount of college students who must work through school, single mothers and parents who must both work to survive in this city, we need to accommodate a variety of different schedules for our residents. Too many New Yorkers are being burdened by school loans and day care fees to not come together to account for the vastly changing dynamic in homes today."

"New Yorkers across all professions are negatively impacted by inflexible work schedules that make juggling careers and families increasingly difficult. I applaud Comptroller Stringer for

advocating flexible work arrangements that allow employees to work outside the confines of the traditional 9-to-5, and for advancing forward-thinking policy recommendations to improve work-life balance,” said **City Councilman Ritchie Torres**.

"This groundbreaking report sheds light on the urgent need for predictable and flexible work schedules and paid family leave to help New York parents and caregivers stay attached to the workforce,” said **Dina Bakst and Sherry Leiwant, co-presidents of A Better Balance**.

“Policymakers should heed the call from working families and enact legislation to establish a floor so all workers, not just a select few, can better meet the conflicting demands of work and family and have the opportunity to succeed.”

“This study shows how important it is for working New Yorkers and their families to have access to paid family leave and the right to request flexible schedules when they need them,” said **32BJ President Hector Figueroa**. “Fast-food and other low-wage workers find it nearly impossible to arrange for childcare, attend classes or work another job due to the practice of on-call scheduling that requires them to be constantly at the disposal of their employers. As we continue to fight for access to \$15 an hour and a union for all workers, we need to promote policies that ensure hard-working people can take care of their families instead of allowing employers to maximize their profits at workers’ expense.”

“As more and more New York City residents find themselves in the role of family caregiver, it is no surprise to AARP that concepts like paid family leave, flexible scheduling and predictive scheduling are so popular,” said **Christopher Widelo, associate state director of AARP New York**. “We hope all policymakers at both the city and state level join City Comptroller Stringer in appreciating the benefits of these forward-looking policies not only for New York’s families but for business and taxpayers in terms of increased productivity on the job and the ability to provide cost-effective care for our aging loved ones at home. Already under a great deal of stress, family caregivers need support, and these policies would provide them the peace of mind of knowing they can care for their loved one without paying an unreasonable price.”

“We applaud the New York City Comptroller’s attention to these critical issues facing New York City’s workers. The survey results make clear that action is needed to make working schedules match the needs of our families. We look forward to working with the Comptroller and the City Council to take action on the issue of scheduling in New York City,” said **Andrew Friedman, Co-Executive Director, Center for Popular Democracy**.

"This powerful new report from Comptroller Scott Stringer underlines the urgency for enactment of public policies like paid family leave and advance notice of work schedules that will make it possible for New Yorkers to support their families without neglecting them," said **Nancy Rankin, Vice President for Policy Research and Advocacy at Community Service Society**. "We found widespread support for such laws in our annual Unheard Third survey."

“For 45 years, Legal Momentum has fought to make the workplace more family-friendly and welcoming to women, including pregnant women and working mothers,” said **Penny M. Venetis, Executive Vice President and Legal Director of Legal Momentum**. “Legal Momentum supports any legislation that would allow women and men to reach their full

potential as workers, without abandoning their responsibilities to their families. Today's technology permits all workers to have more flexible work hours so that they don't have to choose between their work and their families."

Deborah Axt, Co-Executive Director of Make the Road New York, said, "We applaud the Comptroller for being one of the earliest and best champions on the critically important issue of workplace scheduling. All too many immigrant and low wage workers know the reality that this report documents: being called into work with little notice, having hours that fluctuate significantly from week to week, and reporting to work only to be sent home without pay. These scheduling practices create economic instability and make it incredibly difficult for people to plan their lives--to arrange for day care, go to the doctor, and fulfill their obligations as parents and family members."

"A woman's ability to exercise her full reproductive rights, including determining when and whether to have children, is often dependent on the degree of flexibility provided by her employer," said **Andrea Miller, president of NARAL Pro-Choice New York**. "NARAL Pro-Choice New York looks forward to working with Comptroller Stringer and other elected officials to pursue flexible workplace policies that improve women's lives and enable their financial stability."

"The Comptroller's survey confirms how critically important paid family leave is to both New York women and men," said **Donna Lieberman, Executive Director of the New York Civil Liberties Union**. "The state legislature has no reason to delay passing a paid family leave program – it's good for business, it costs the state nothing, and it will finally ensure New Yorkers can take the time they need to care for their families without facing debt or bankruptcy."

"Comptroller Stringer asked and New Yorkers resoundingly answered: The public wants and needs stronger family-friendly policies and protections to create work-life balance and economic security. New laws ensuring paid family leave, flex-time, and advanced notice of schedules will provide workers with the necessary tools to manage the demands of the 21st Century workforce," said **Beverly Neufeld, President of PowHer New York**.

"Due to on-call scheduling, many retail workers not only live paycheck to paycheck, but now hour to hour. Our union has long been fighting the unfair practice of erratic scheduling and the hourly injustice of on-call shifts in retail jobs. When low-wage workers face changing schedules week to week and even within hours of a shift can be told not to come in, it puts a major strain on their lives. This leads to family and financial stress, not knowing when one will work or how much they will make week to week. I would like to thank Comptroller Scott Stringer for this report that will now provide city policymakers with necessary details of how 'flexible' work schedules harm workers at the low end of wage scale," said **Stuart Appelbaum, President RWDSU**

Rachel Laforest, Director of the Retail Action Project (RWDSU), says "In retail, and across the service sector, workers face increasingly erratic hours due to employers' efforts to match labor costs to consumer demand. These scheduling practices are not sustainable: families don't know if they can meet weekly expenses, caregivers can't predict when they will have to arrange

for care for children or relatives, and students don't know if they will be able to attend classes.. It's time to call for worker-driven flexibility where employees' scheduling needs are respected. The Retail Action Project applauds Comptroller Stringer for bringing work-life balance to the forefront and calling for the right to request a flexible schedule."

To read the full report and survey findings, please click [here](#).

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