

For Immediate Release: Monday, March 16, 2015

Contact: Emma Woods, emma@berlinrosen.com, 646-200-5303

More than Fifty Women Lawmakers, Leaders, and Organizations Respond to Governor Cuomo with Letter Urging Action on Paid Family Leave

Signers, Including Advocates for Women's Equality Agenda, Refute Governor's Recent Statement that Albany has "No Appetite" for Paid Family Leave Legislation

Letter Comes on the Heels of Senate Republicans' Inclusion of Paid Family Leave Program in Budget Proposal

New York, NY – Fifty-seven women lawmakers, leaders, and organizations have signed an open letter to Governor Cuomo urging immediate action on paid family leave. Released today by the New York Paid Family Leave Insurance Campaign, the letter addresses the Governor's [recent comment](#) that there is "no appetite" for paid family leave legislation in Albany.

The letter comes on the heels of [news](#) that the Senate Republicans would include a paid family leave program in their budget proposal, and participate in a joint hearing of the Labor and Social Service committees that will address paid family leave later this week.

Women elected leaders who signed the letter include Senate Democratic Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson, Senator Liz Krueger, Senator Velmanette Montgomery, Senator Toby Ann Stavisky, Assembly Member Shelley Mayer, Assemblywoman Nily Rozic, Assemblywoman Addy Russell, Assemblywoman Michaelle C. Solages, New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, New York City Public Advocate Letitia James, and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer. They are joined by the Women's Equality Coalition, League of Women Voters of New York State, and the leaders of organizations championing equal pay, reproductive rights, access to childcare, and more.

"Albany's appetite for change, you stated, is satiated by other policies that seek to advance women's equality, and which deserve to be addressed first. We respectfully disagree," the letter reads.

"As women lawmakers, representatives of women's organizations, and advocates for the Women's Equality Agenda, we write to tell you that New Yorkers are, in fact, quite hungry for paid family leave, and the economic security it would bring to our communities and our families. The time for this issue has come. New York should step forward as a leader."

The letter goes on to note that New York could easily become the next state to implement paid family leave. Like the three states that already have paid family

leave – California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island – the program could piggyback on New York’s existing Temporary Disability Insurance fund (TDI).

“Unlike other states working hard to find money to create a new paid family leave program, New York has an existing structure that can easily be expanded to include care of new children and family members. **Creating this program will cost our state nothing, while providing critical support for families,**” the letter goes on to say.

Read the letter in its entirety below:

Dear Governor Cuomo,

We write in response to your recent remarks that New York lacks the “appetite” to pass paid family leave legislation. Albany’s appetite for change, you stated, is satiated by other policies that seek to advance women’s equality, and which deserve to be addressed first.

We respectfully disagree. As women lawmakers, representatives of women’s organizations, and advocates for the Women’s Equality Agenda, we write to tell you that New Yorkers are, in fact, quite hungry for paid family leave, and the economic security it would bring to our communities and our families. The time for this issue has come. New York should step forward as a leader.

From wage discrimination to paid family leave, policies that advance gender equity work in tandem. Indeed, the lack of paid family leave is a key contributor to women’s lower pay and inequality, and it further impacts fathers, seniors, newborns, the chronically ill, and our economy as a whole.

Why paid family leave now? Because, as our President [rightfully recognized](#) in his State of the Union address, the U.S. is “the only advanced country on Earth that doesn’t guarantee paid sick leave or paid maternity leave to our workers.”

Because voters on both sides of the aisle [overwhelmingly agree](#) on the issue, and that government has a responsibility to provide such policies that reflect the realities of modern families. Statewide, 7 out of 10 voters support modernizing our Temporary Disability Insurance system to provide paid family leave, according to a Marist poll. In NYC, support has grown to 84%, with the latest Community Service Society/Lake survey finding that 2 out of 3 New Yorkers strongly support paid family leave.

Because [doctors](#) have found that policies allowing family members to be with their loved ones through an illness are good for the health of their patients; and because [economists](#) know it keeps women in the workforce and increases their earning potential – without hurting businesses small or large.

And because New York is the only state besides Hawaii that has a Temporary Disability Insurance program that has not been expanded to include paid family leave. Unlike other states working hard to find money to create a new paid family leave program, New York has an existing structure that can easily be expanded to include care of new children and family members. Creating this program will cost our state nothing, while providing critical support for families.

Paid family leave would ensure that no New Yorker has to choose between the health and economic stability of her family. It would mean that the major life moments we all share – the arrival of a new child, or a close relative needing care – do not have to mean debt or bankruptcy.

As a national consensus grows around the issue, the appetite for paid family leave in New York State only grows. And thus, we call on you to join us in supporting and pressing for a paid family leave policy that not only advances women, but all of New York.

Sincerely,

Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Senate Democratic Leader

Ruth Hassell-Thompson
Senator

Liz Krueger
Senator

Velmanette Montgomery
Senator

Toby Ann Stavisky
Senator

Shelley Mayer
Assembly Member

Nily Rozic
Assemblywoman

Addy Russell
Assemblywoman

Michaëlle C. Solages
Assemblywoman

Melissa Mark-Viverito
Speaker, New York City Council

Letitia James
New York City Public Advocate

Gale Brewer
Manhattan Borough President

Coraminita Mahr
Vice President, 1199 SEIU

Dina Bakst & Sherry Leiwant
Co-Founders & Co-Presidents, A Better Balance

American Association of University Women

Mitra Behroozi

Barbara Caress
Consultant

Denise Berkley
National Women's Chair, CBTU

Nancy Kolben
Executive Director, Center for Children's Initiatives

Karen Scharff
Executive Director, Citizen Action New York

Nancy Rankin
VP for Policy Research and Advocacy, Community Service Society

Elizabeth Isakson, MD FAAP & Dina Lieser, MD, FAAP
Co-Directors, Docs for Tots

Susan Ochshorn
Founder, ECE PolicyWorks

Eileen Fisher
Chief Creative Officer, Eileen Fisher, Inc

Brette McSweeney
Executive Director, Eleanor Roosevelt Legacy

Martha Baker

Equity in Education and Employment

Family Planning Advocates

Jennifer Jones Austin

Executive Director, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies

Cynthia DiBartolo, Esq.

Chairperson, Greater New York Chamber of Commerce

Deborah King

Sonia Ivany

President Emeritus, Labor Council For Latin American Advancement

League of Women Voters of New York State

Sharon Lerner

Journalist and Author

Sonia Ossorio

President, National Organization for Women - New York State

Donna Lieberman

Executive Director, New York Civil Liberties Union

Donna Dolan

Executive Director, New York Paid Leave Coalition

Suzy Ballantyne

New York Women's Equality Coalition

Ana Oliveira

Planned Parenthood - Central and Western NY

Planned Parenthood - Hudson Peconic

Planned Parenthood - Mid-Hudson Valley

Planned Parenthood - Mohawk-Hudson

Planned Parenthood - Nassau County

Joe Sammons

CEO, Planned Parenthood - Southern Finger Lakes

Joan Malin

President & CEO, Planned Parenthood of New York City

Beverly Neufeld

PowHer NY Equal Pay Campaign

Mary Beth Morrissey

Public Health Association of New York City (PHANYC)

Carolyn Lee-Davis

Policy Director, The Children's Agenda

Dana Friedman, Ed. D

President, The Early Years Institute

Rhonda Nelson

Chair, UFCW Women's Network

Chelly Hegan

President/CEO, Upper Hudson Planned Parenthood

Jacqueline M. Ebanks

Executive Director, Women's City Club of NY

Janel Quarless

Working Families

Carole Coppens

Executive Director, YWCA of Binghamton and Broome County

Christine Sadowski

Executive Director, YWCA Orange County

###

The New York Paid Family Leave Insurance Campaign consists of a diverse group of women's organizations, children's advocates, labor and public health leaders, advocates for seniors and those with chronic disease, and community and faith-based organizations. The Paid Family Leave Insurance Campaign's Steering Committee consists of A Better Balance, Community Service Society, New York Civil Liberties Union, New York Paid Leave Coalition and the NYS AFL-CIO.