



## The FIRST Act

The FIRST Act would support state efforts to provide paid leave to working people for the birth or adoption of a child, to recover from serious illness or to care for a seriously ill family member.

The FIRST Act would authorize \$1.5 billion in federal grant funding to states to seed new programs or to bolster existing paid leave programs. For a state to be eligible, its program must provide a minimum of six weeks of partially- or fully-paid parental leave. States with programs that cover additional reasons to take leave under the FMLA would receive further federal funding. The Act provides states the flexibility to develop their own programs based on their priorities.

### **Washington State (and other states without fully-implemented existing family leave programs):**

- ◆ Could receive a start-up grant to develop and implement the program for up to three years, and a grant to fund 50% of the wage replacement for a parental leave program for the first six months of the program.
- ◆ Could receive additional funding if its program provides leave for additional purposes under the FMLA. States programs that include paid parental leave *and either* paid family leave or paid medical leave could receive a grant to cover 75% of the program's wage replacement cost for six months. State programs that offer paid parental leave, paid family leave *and* paid medical leave could receive a grant to cover 100% of the program's wage replacement cost for six months.
- ◆ Could then apply for an additional grant under the terms available to states with existing programs.

### **Eligibility**

- ◆ Workers eligible for wage replacement under the FIRST Act would be required to take leave under the FMLA, under other federal, state, or local law, or under a private plan in order to care for themselves, a child, spouse or parent with a serious health condition.
- ◆ To receive a grant, states would apply to the Secretary of Labor, who would take into consideration the program's scope and cost-effectiveness and the program's accessibility particularly to low-wage working families and the extent of the benefits that would be offered.

### **Quick Facts**

- ◆ **Since the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was passed in 1993, working people have been able to take job-protected time off more than 100 million times** to recover from their own serious illness, to care for a seriously ill family member or to bond with a new child.
- ◆ **Millions of workers cannot afford to take the unpaid leave the FMLA provides.** Among FMLA-qualified workers who need leave but do not take it, 78% said they could not afford to miss a paycheck. Two in five low-income workers have no paid leave (family leave, sick days or vacation) of any kind.
- ◆ **Paid family and medical leave would enable workers to care for themselves and family members without losing their economic stability.** Twenty-five percent of all poverty spells begin with the birth of a child. Over 34 million caregivers provide assistance at the weekly equivalent of a part-time job (more than 21 hours), and the estimated economic value of this support is roughly equal to \$350 billion.