

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – MEDIA ADVISORY

February 5, 2013

MEDIA CONTACT:

Marianne Bellesorte:

Vice President of Policy, Strategy & Communications
PathWays PA
310 Amosland Road
Holmes, PA 19043
(p) 610-543-5022 ext. 209
mbellesorte@pathwayspa.org



Two decades after first federal law addressing family leave,

ACTIVISTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY CELEBRATE FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

Growing Calls for Expanded Access to Affordable Leave Include Call in PA for FMLA Extension to Siblings

Anne Marie Pearson, the driving force behind "[Joanne's Law](#)," a bill to [expand FMLA](#) coverage in Pennsylvania for family members caring for siblings. "I often think, 'Who would have taken care of Joanne if I did not sacrifice my livelihood and my job?'"

Holmes, PA – February 5 marks the 20-year anniversary of President Clinton's signing of the historic Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the first federal law that guaranteed Americans protected time to care for loved ones. Since its implementation in 1993, FMLA leave has been used more than [100 million times](#) by an estimated [35 million](#) men and women, helping a generation of children get a healthy start in life, a generation of seniors age with greater peace of mind, and many adults care for family without having to sacrifice their jobs or health insurance.

FMLA has proven to be enormously popular, with [88 percent](#) of Americans who know about the law having a favorable opinion of it. The vast majority of businesses report the program somewhat or very easy to comply with.

FMLA offers 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave, which workers can use to care for a new baby, a sick family member, or to recover from an illness. To be protected by FMLA, a worker must be employed by a company with 50 or more employees and work 1,250 hours per year and be on the job for at least a year.

Yet, these provisions leave out more than half of the workforce. [Several million workers](#) a year who are eligible for FMLA and need leave don't take it - mostly because they cannot afford to go without pay. FMLA leaves out workers in smaller companies and many part-timers; it has a narrow definition of family that does not include domestic partners or siblings; and it does not cover routine illnesses.

"FMLA has made a big impact on the lives, families, and jobs of millions of Americans," said Ellen Bravo, Executive Director of Family Values @ Work. "But without paid leave, millions more are unable to put family first. Families, the economy, and the workforce have changed significantly over the past 20 years. We need to expand the protections of FMLA so family leave becomes more affordable and accessible."

The anniversary kicks off a month of activity in Congress, starting with a press conference organized by Leader Nancy Pelosi, in-district events with Members of Congress to discuss expanding work-family policies, and renewed momentum behind expanding the protections of FMLA at the federal level.

To spur federal policies, workers and activists from across the country are filling the gaps in FMLA through local campaigns to advance policies like paid sick days and family and medical leave insurance. These policies boost the economy by helping workers keep their families afloat during a serious illness or a birth, and by protecting Americans' jobs and paychecks when they need to take off a day to care for a sick child or recover from the flu.

"I made the difficult decision to resign my position of 17 years to help take care of my sister until she passed away," says Anne Marie Pearson, the driving force behind "[Joanne's Law](#)," a bill currently in Pennsylvania's State House. "I often think, 'Who would have taken care of Joanne if I did not sacrifice my livelihood and my job?'"

In 2002 [California](#) became the first state to implement a Paid Family Leave (PFL) program, followed in 2009 by [New Jersey](#). The programs have been enormously successful, with [1.4 million claims filed in California](#) and [100,000 filed in New Jersey](#) since their implementation, and high levels of support among business owners and workers. Washington State, Arizona, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, and Pennsylvania have recently considered paid family leave programs.

Across the country, cities and states have also been adopting earned sick days policies to address short-term health needs not covered by FMLA. There is growing support for paid sick days bills among City Council members in [Philadelphia](#), [New York](#), and [Portland](#). State assemblies in [Massachusetts](#) and [Maryland](#) kicked off their legislative sessions by introducing earned sick time bills, with elected leaders in Vermont, [Washington State](#), and Georgia considering legislation as well. These active campaigns build on sick time victories in [Connecticut](#), which passed the first statewide law in 2011, [Seattle](#) in 2011, Washington, D.C. in 2008, San Francisco in 2006, and a victorious ballot initiative in [Long Beach, California](#) that enabled hotel workers to earn sick time in November 2012.

"We're proud of the progress our network is making," Ellen Bravo said. "This is how we won FMLA and it's how we'll win expanded protections for everyone."

To follow the conversation about FMLA, use #FMLA20

#####

Read the [personal stories of working people](#) across the country who benefitted from FMLA, or suffered due to the lack of protection.

[Family Values @ Work](#) is the network of 20 state coalitions working for paid sick days, family leave insurance and other policies that value families at work.