
BILL NO: Senate Bill 809
TITLE: Education - Public School Employees - Parental Leave
COMMITTEE: Finance Committee
HEARING DATE: March 1, 2023
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is dedicated to ensuring the physical safety, the economic security, and the autonomy of women throughout the State. One way we work towards this goal is by supporting systemic changes to our current economic policies and practices that disproportionately affect women. Senate Bill 809 will allow public school employees to use up to 60 days of parental leave for the care of a child after birth or adoption. It is an important piece in the infrastructure we have worked on to create a balance between employment and caregiving demands that disproportionately burden women, which also includes Earned Safe and Sick Leave and of course the Family and Medical Leave Insurance program.

The issue of parental leave is of particular concern to the Women's Law Center as women continue to be the primary caregivers for children and family members. Yet at the same time, the number of women entering the workforce has continued to grow. Unfortunately, while women now make up nearly half the workforce, and two-thirds of Maryland families have women as the sole, primary, or co-breadwinner, women are disproportionately represented in low-wage jobs. Indeed, while only 18% of workers in general are covered by paid leave, that number is reduced to 6% for low wage workers – the workers who can least afford to go without a paycheck. As such, it should not be surprising that 15% of working women who have a child without paid leave end up on public assistance.

School teachers are no exception. Across the nation, fewer than 25% of school districts offer paid family leave, despite the considerable amount of evidence supporting its medical and economic benefits¹. More than 75% of teachers are women and given the record number of teachers, and women in general, leaving the work force in the aftermath of the pandemic, paid parental leave is just one tool that districts can offer to improve retention and employment satisfaction. Significantly, the WLC understands there are sponsor amendments that would ensure both certificated and non-certificated employees are included within the scope of the bill. The WLC supports this important amendment as it is more inclusive, particularly of employees who are disproportionately earning the lowest wages.

Senate Bill 809 is a reasonable and modest effort that demonstrates Maryland's commitment to educators and families by helping to protect their health, stability and wellbeing, and will have an immediate positive impact on our economy. Therefore, the Women's Law Center urges a favorable report on SB 809.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit legal services organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal representation for individuals and statewide advocacy to achieve systemic change.

¹ [How Many School Districts Offer Paid Parental Leave?](#) National Council on Teacher Quality, November 10, 2022