

Paid Family Leave is Family Values in Action and Deserves Bipartisan Support

Paid family leave is a both a feminist issue and an issue of family values; it should appeal to Democrats and Republicans alike and deserves bipartisan support.

Paid family leave is a reproductive justice issue because removing barriers to family planning choices gives people full autonomy to make these life-changing decisions. Per Guttmacher Institute, a leading reproductive rights research organization, [the two most common reasons that people give for why they have abortions](#) are that they cannot afford to care for a child, and that having a child would interfere with their ability to care for others. Pregnant people often support their partners, other children (60 percent of people who have abortions are parents), and family members who may be sick or have disabilities.

Because paid family leave programs like House Bill 1441 would provide financial support to employees when they take leave to have a child, take care of a loved one, or are sick themselves, this would help remove the cost and time barriers that people *most frequently cite* in making their abortion decisions. I believe abortion should be free and on demand at any time—I personally do not think it should be a goal of the state to reduce the number of abortions—but it absolutely should be a goal of the legislature's to give North Dakotans fuller agency in making these family planning decisions, and to make all options truly accessible. With the financial support of a paid family leave program, families can prioritize what is best for themselves and their families, and not the constraints of capitalism or the economic pressure to continue to bring in income.

For Republicans to claim that they are the party of family values, they must support paid family leave—it's time to put your money where your mouth is. If the state seeks to influence family planning decisions, they can either use the carrot or the stick. Our state laws and policies can either encourage people to start, grow, and care for the families by offering supportive programs like paid family leave, or they can punish and criminalize North Dakotans for seeking out other options, with abortion bans like House Bill 1313.

I hope that both Democratic and Republican legislators choose to do the right thing and make the more life-giving choice of helping North Dakotans to care for their families, and helping them thrive.