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Good afternoon,

I am currently on an unpaid maternity leave with what will be my last child, and I am writing to ask that you provide paid leave for future parents. I moved to Maine from California, and my older son was born in California. There I was paid 60% differential pay through my six month leave, and it allowed me to remain with him during his most vulnerable stage of life before sending him to a childcare facility. This time around, my leave is unpaid, and I will return to work when he is twelve weeks old. My family, when both parents are working, makes over \$100,000 per year, but we are still struggling with the cost of groceries, heat, etc. This unpaid leave is not easy on our family. I have asked my job for hourly remote work, though that has not panned out. My older son is in preschool, and he has delays that affect his social interactions, so pulling him out in order to save money is not really an option. Also, we cannot afford to lose his spot, as space in childcare facilities is almost nonexistent. This is all very stressful, but I know that we are still fortunate enough to be able to take the time off, unpaid. What about the families who do not make over \$100,000 per year? What about those who won't be able to put food on the table if they take time off from work?

I have also learned that in Maine childcare facilities are not allowed to take babies under six weeks old. I do agree that children under six weeks should not be in childcare, as it is dangerous for babies that small to be exposed to illness that other children might carry. However, what happens with the family whose parents cannot afford to miss six weeks of work? I imagine that the six week rule was put into place to protect babies, but making sure that families can have financial stability is also essential for protecting babies.

I would argue that paid family leave should be available to both parents, because bonding time is important, but I also want to talk about the physical part of giving birth. During labor, my baby's heart rate started dropping. It was too late for a c-section, and he had to be vacuumed out in order to save his life. This caused there to be a substantial tear in my cervix, and I lost a lot of blood. I received stitches and was given instructions for after care, including exerting myself physically, watching for signs that there was an infection or reopening of the tear, and a follow-up visit in two weeks to check the healing. Many women have c-sections or have other circumstances that prolong their healing. If I could not afford to take time off from work, should I have gone in and risk making things worse and possibly being rehospitalized? My older son's birth was less traumatic on my body, but even healing from an uncomplicated birth takes time, and as a society we need to care for people enough to make sure they have it.

I will not be having any more children, but I ask you to please really think about how impactful this bill could be for future parents. Everyone has a parent, knows a parent, or is a parent. This could be life-changing for so many people. If not for the adults, do it for the babies who need their parents.

Thank you,  
Saira