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When my second child was born I was entitled to 12 weeks of unpaid leave per the FMLA, and through my employer was offered short term disability: 6 weeks of half time pay to recover from birth, relearn to breastfeed, and bond with my new baby.

Because my employer did not offer a fully paid leave, and they continued to deduct the cost of my health insurance from a paycheck I wasn't receiving, I ended up owing my employer nearly \$1000 when I returned from giving birth. This was a crushing financial blow to our family which I wasn't prepared for because it wasn't communicated to me before I left to have my baby.

This experience left me feeling betrayed and humiliated by my employer, and I ended up leaving this job not long after.

In Maine it is illegal to separate a puppy from its mother before 7 weeks, but no such protections are in place for human babies. As many as 1 in 4 American mothers must return to work 10 days after giving birth which puts them and their babies at higher risk for physical and mental health complications.

If we claim to care about families, it is time we catch up with the rest of the developed world and offer humane structures of support for parents and children. Please reach out to your local legislator, or have a chat with the person collecting signatures on election day to learn more.