

## — TOP TAKEAWAYS —

# Paid Leave and the Pandemic

## A NEW PAID LEAVE ENTITLEMENT WON'T HELP ADDRESS A PANDEMIC

- **Many progressives** are using the pandemic to push a new government entitlement to paid sick leave and paid medical and family leave. They argue that a paid leave entitlement could help “workplaces and communities respond more effectively and equitably” to a pandemic.
- A government entitlement to paid leave, however, is unlikely to prevent or effectively limit a pandemic. Studies **have not shown** that such entitlements significantly slowed the transmission of infectious disease.
- In fact, states that have adopted paid leave entitlements, **like New York and New Jersey**, have generally fared worse with respect to various measures of the severity of the pandemic.

## A PAID LEAVE ENTITLEMENT WOULD HARM WORKING FAMILIES

- A new government entitlement to paid leave would impose serious costs on working families.
- Sick leave mandates **are associated with lower wages**, particularly in sectors that employ low-income workers. After the passage of San Francisco's mandate, **nearly 40 percent of employers** who had not previously offered sick leave reduced employee compensation.
- A paid family and medical leave entitlement would require a **significant payroll tax increase**. **Recent research** also raises serious concern that such a program would transfer income from low-income to higher-income families, because low-income families would pay higher taxes but are less likely to receive benefits.

## THERE ARE BETTER WAYS TO SUPPORT PAID LEAVE

- We can expand access to paid leave without harming working families.
- Employers are **increasingly** voluntarily offering paid leave benefits.
- Policies such as creating a **voluntary family and medical leave insurance program**, advancing **Social Security** benefits or **Child Tax Credits** to new parents, permitting employees to **accrue paid leave in lieu of overtime pay**, and **modernizing tax-preferred savings accounts** could also support paid leave without burdening employers or increasing taxes on workers.

Click [here](#) to read the full policy focus and learn more about paid leave and the pandemic.