



### **What is paid family and medical leave insurance?**

The Montana Family And Medical Leave Insurance Act (the FMLI Act) would pool small amounts from employees and employers to create a dedicated funding stream for workers when they need time off to care for themselves or a loved one. From these small contributions representing less than half of one percent of wages, eligible workers would receive a portion of their wages while on leave.

This model has already been put into practice in several states, demonstrating a cost-effective approach that boosts workers' economic security, families' well-being, public health, and the overall economy.

### **Who is covered?**

Covering as many workers as possible is essential to program success, not only to ensure workers get the benefits they need, but also because it spreads out the overall costs and keep the contribution levels lower.

Eligibility is matched up with employers subject to unemployment insurance (UI) and eligible employees within UI.<sup>1</sup> In general, FMLI Act will cover the vast majority of workers. In order to qualify for FMLI benefits, the eligible employee have earned qualifying wages under UI benefits, and have contributed into the FMLI Fund.<sup>2</sup> Pursuant to federal law, FMLI Act would not apply to federal or tribal government employers.

### **What types of leave are covered?**

Under this program, a covered individual can take leave for the following events: to care for a ones own serious health condition; to care for a family member's serious health condition; to care for a new child within the first year of birth, adoption, or foster placement; to care for a service member or veteran who is the next of kin and undergoing medical treatment, recuperation or therapy; or in certain circumstances when a family member is called to active duty (for defined limited leave periods). Serious health condition is a situation where the individual or family member either requires inpatient care in a hospital or other medical care facility or requires continuing treatment by a health care provider.<sup>3</sup>

### **Who counts as family?**

Family member is defined to include a spouse, child, parent, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, domestic partner, or a spouse of any of the previously mentioned, or any individual related to the eligible employee by blood or close association that is the equivalent of an acknowledged family relationship. This definition ensures workers are able to care for their family, recognizing that families vary across the state. An inclusive definition of family ensures that workers who face various family circumstances are covered including those who need time off to care for seriously ill parents, domestic partners, or siblings.

## How long can people take leave?

Workers would be eligible for a maximum of 12 weeks of leave benefits in a benefit year. The leave does not have to be taken all at once and can be split between more than one qualifying reason.

## What benefits will the program pay?

Covered individual who applies for benefits will receive a portion of their weekly wages, based on income. Wages will be calculated similarly to UI.<sup>4</sup> In order to ensure the program is viable for all workers, lowest-wage workers would receive a higher portion of their wages.

Workers who earn less than half of the state average annual wage under UI program (\$19,650 for 2017) will receive a 100 percent of their wages during qualifying leave. For workers earning more than half the state average annual wage, their benefits would scale down as income increases. The FMLI Act uses the UI laws to calculate average annual wage and the base wages for the covered individual. The maximum weekly wage would be capped at \$1,000.

The below chart shows benefit levels at certain wage levels.

Table 1: Benefit Levels under FMLI Act			
<i>If you earn this much a year....</i>	<i>Which is about this much a week...</i>	<i>Your weekly benefits will be...</i>	<i>Or, this percent of your usual pay....</i>
\$10,000	\$192	\$192	100%
\$20,000	\$384	\$375	97%
\$30,000	\$576	\$472	82%
\$40,000	\$769	\$568	74%
\$50,000	\$961	\$664	69%
\$60,000	\$1,153	\$760	66%
\$70,000	\$1,346	\$856	64%
Above \$85,000	Above \$1,634	\$1,000 max	61% or less

## How does one apply for leave?

An eligible individual will need to apply through the Montana Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) in a process similar to applying for Unemployment Insurance. The Department may require proof of medical condition and reason for accessing benefits. Once approved the benefit will be distributed to the qualified individual on a weekly basis. An employer may require the employee to take FMLI benefits concurrently with a short-term disability or family leave policy under a collective bargaining agreement or employer policy.

## How is the program funded?

Contributions will be split equally between the employer and employee. Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) will set contribution rates through rule to ensure solvency of the fund, but those total contributions cannot exceed 1 percent of employee wages. The contribution rate would apply

to a worker's wages up to the base wages amount (approximately \$85,000), at an amount that is consistent with the maximum weekly benefit level of \$1,000.

In a comprehensive analysis by the Montana Budget and Policy Center, using similar eligibility and benefit criteria and a study of take-up rates seen in existing statewide family and medical leave insurance programs, contributions are estimated to be less than half of one percent of employees' earnings.<sup>5</sup> These contributions would cover the annual benefits paid out in a benefit year, estimated to be approximately \$76.8 million in the first year.

Table 2 provides an estimate of contribution levels, based on Montana Budget and Policy Center's analysis.

<b>Table 2: Employees and employers would share equal contributions representing less than half of one percent of total wages</b>		
<i><b>If a eligible employee earns annual wages totaling...</b></i>	<i><b>The employee's monthly contribution would be...</b></i>	<i><b>And the employer's monthly contribution would be...</b></i>
\$20,000	\$4.16	\$4.16
\$30,000	\$6.25	\$6.25
\$40,000	\$8.33	\$8.33
\$50,000	\$10.42	\$10.42
\$60,000	\$12.50	\$12.50
\$70,000	\$14.58	\$14.58
Max. Contributions (on incomes above \$85,000)	\$17.71	\$17.71

### **How does investing in paid leave benefit working parents in Montana?**

Paid leave helps parents remain financially secure while balancing home and work demands. Access to paid leave increases the likelihood that women will return to work after leave, enabling them to earn more over their lifetime and progress in their careers.<sup>6</sup>

### **How does investing in paid leave benefit older workers and adult caregivers?**

As our population ages, caring for an aging family member is a growing responsibility. In Montana, 27 percent of Montana workers are 55 years or older, and 118,000 people are responsible for caring for an adult family member, like spouses and aging parents.<sup>7,8</sup> Paid leave would help them remain financially secure when they care for seriously ill family members.

### **How does investing in paid leave benefit businesses?**

Montana's job growth will slow as 137,000 workers approach retirement and too few skilled workers move into jobs.<sup>9</sup> Paid leave helps businesses attract and retain skilled workers and allows small businesses to better compete by providing employee-benefits packages. Employers with paid leave experience reduced turnover costs. In Montana, retaining one employee in a given year could save an employer up to \$12,000.<sup>10,11</sup> In states with paid family and medical leave programs,

employers have experienced improved worker attitudes and productivity and almost no abuse of the program.<sup>12,13</sup>

## How does investing in paid leave benefit Montana's economy?

Paid leave helps keep workers attached to the workforce and can increase their earnings over their lifetime. In one state with a state paid leave program, new mothers who took paid family leave were 93 percent more likely to return to their employers and earn more the year after giving birth.<sup>14</sup> In 2014, about 13,000 Montana employees became parents.<sup>15</sup> These parents faced potential lost wages of about \$45 million because of unpaid parental leave taken.<sup>16</sup> Low-income women using paid leave were less likely to need SNAP benefits and reported receiving an average of \$800 less in public assistance the year after a giving birth.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Montana Code Annotated 39-51-202 – 39-51-204. Under unemployment insurance, a covered employer is defined to one of the following: (1) total payroll for current or previous calendar year exceeds \$1,000; (2) an employer that acquires a business already subject to Montana UI; (3) an employer that is subject to Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA); an employer that employs agricultural workers and pay more than \$20,000 in cash for ag labor in any quarter from the previous or current year; (5) employer that employs 10 or more ag workers in 20 different weeks during the current or previous year; or (6) employ domestic or household workers and pay more than \$1,000 in a quarter of current or previous year.

<sup>2</sup> Qualifying wages is defined in MCA 39-51-2105. "To qualify for benefits, an individual must have been paid total wages for employment in the base period in an amount: (1) not less than 1 ½ times the wages earned in the calendar quarter in which wages were the highest during the base period; however, the total wages in the base period must be equal to or greater than 7% of the average annual wage described in 39-51-2201; or (2) equal to or greater than 50% of the average annual wage described in 39-51-2201."

<sup>3</sup> This definition of serious health condition is similar to federal Family Medical Leave Act. This includes: (i) continuing treatment by a health care provider that results in incapacity of more than three consecutive calendar days, such as pneumonia, surgery or broken bones; (ii) chronic conditions that require periodic visits to provider, continue over extended period, and cause episodic rather than continuing periods of incapacity, such as diabetes or epilepsy; or (iii) conditions requiring multiple treatments and recovery from treatments, such as cancer. *See also*, 29 C.F.R. 825.114.

<sup>4</sup> Wages is defined in MCA 39-51-201(25).

<sup>5</sup> Workers contribute less than half of one percent of their total earnings (0.451).  $\$10 * 0.00451 = 4.5$  cents. Premium estimated through program cost model created by the Colorado Fiscal Institute and adjusted by the Montana Budget and Policy Center. The Montana Budget and Policy Center. *Helping people balance work and family: It's within Montana's reach*. Not yet released.

<sup>6</sup> Montana Budget and Policy Center. "Paid Family and Medical Leave: Supporting Families, Business, and the Economy." November 2015. <http://www.montanabudget.org/paid-leave-report-1/>.

<sup>7</sup> Wagner, Barbara et al. *State of Montana Labor Day Report to the Governor, 2015*. The Montana Department of Labor and Industry. August, 2015. <http://lmi.mt.gov/media/98012/ldr-15.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Reinhard, Feinberg, Choula & Houser. *Valuing the Invaluable 2015 Update*. AARP Public Policy Institute. July 2015 <http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/2015/valuing-the-invaluable-2015-update-undeniable-progress.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Wagner, Barbara et al. *State of Montana Labor Day Report to the Governor, 2015*. The Montana Department of Labor and Industry. August, 2015. <http://lmi.mt.gov/media/98012/ldr-15.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Meta-analysis found that turnover of an employee earning up to \$75,000 annually could cost a business between 10%-30% of that original employee's earnings. Boushey & Glynn. *There are Significant Business Costs to Replacing Employees*. Center for American Progress. November 2012. <http://www.measuredexperience.com/content/the-significant-business-costs-to-replacing-employee-the-price-of-employee-turnover.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Average earnings in Montana in 2014 were \$39,880.  $\times 10\%$  and  $30\% = \$3,988$  and  $\$11,964$ . Bureau of Labor Statistics Website. Occupational Employment Statistics. Montana 2014. Retrieved May 2015. [http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_mt.htm#00-0000](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_mt.htm#00-0000).

<sup>12</sup> Appelbaum & Milkman. *Leaves That Pay: Employer and Work Experiences with Paid Family Leave in California*. Center for Economic and Policy Research. 2011. <http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/paid-family-leave-1-2011.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Houser & Vartanian. *Pay Matters: The Positive Economic Impacts of Paid Family Leave for Families, Businesses, and the Public*. Center for Women and Work. 2012. <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/other/pay-matters.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Houser & Vartanian. *Pay Matters: The Positive Economic Impacts of Paid Family Leave for Families, Businesses, and the Public*. Center for Women and Work. 2012. <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/other/pay-matters.pdf>.

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<sup>15</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. Fertility Characteristics. 2013 3-Year Estimates. Retrieved May, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Equal Pay for Equal Work Task Force. *Equal Pay in Montana Fact Sheet*. Retrieved October 2015.

<http://www.equalpay.mt.gov/documents/EqualPayinMontanaFactSheet.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Houser & Vartanian. *Pay Matters: The Positive Economic Impacts of Paid Family Leave for Families, Businesses, and the Public*. Center for Women and Work. 2012. <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/other/pay-matters.pdf>.