



# Families that Work

## Policies that support work and family balance for all New Jerseyans

The New Jersey Time to Care Coalition is a diverse group of over 60 advocacy, union, research, and other community-based organizations working to improve workplace programs and policies that provide working families the opportunity to be responsible family members and productive workers. Everyone benefits when workers are able to balance job obligations and family needs. Giving workers financial security by allowing them to take paid leave to deal with a child's illness or a parent's recovery from a stroke not only improves outcomes for children and families, but also raises worker morale and productivity. Paid "time to care" means strong families, strong workplaces, and strong communities.

*The following policy solutions are rooted in the belief that all workers should be provided the opportunity to integrate family caregiving responsibilities into their daily work lives.*

### **Paid Sick Days**

#### **➤ Provide earned sick and safe days to all New Jersey workers**

In New Jersey over one million workers lack paid sick days and even those that have them, they cannot use the time to care for sick children or other family members who depend on them. The need for a New Jersey earned paid sick days policy is especially acute for low-wage workers, the majority of whom are women and frequently lack benefits afforded higher income workers. Workers who lack earned sick days are more likely to go to work sick or send their child to school sick, putting their own health, their children's health, or the health of their co-workers and public at risk. Earned sick and safe days will also allow victims of domestic violence to take job protected, paid time off from work to address the effects of domestic violence.

### **Family Leave Insurance Expansion**

#### **➤ Expand and improve NJ's paid family leave program so that more New Jersey workers can access it**

New Jersey implemented a Family Leave Insurance (FLI) program in 2009 to provide six weeks of partial wage replacement for workers to take leave to bond with a new child and to care for seriously ill family members. Since implementation, the program has had low usage among NJ's working families. To increase access, the program requires improvements; these include adding grandparents, grandchildren, siblings, adult children, and parent-in-laws to the program's definition of family; increasing the level of wage replacement and the weekly maximum benefit amount; extending job protections for those using the program, and increasing the number of weeks to 12. The state should also do more to educate and inform the public about the availability of the program, as far too few New Jerseyans are aware that the program exists.

### **Fair Scheduling**

#### **➤ Provide New Jersey workers with the right to fair scheduling & to request flexible work schedules**

When an employer creates irregular work schedules (i.e. assigning shifts a few days ahead of time or canceling them last minute), working people struggle to maintain stable child care, pursue education to advance their careers, get needed medical care — or simply make enough hours at their jobs to get by. New Jersey needs a Fair Scheduling policy that provides more certainty and worker directed control over work schedules, so that families can juggle work and caregiving with less stress and more predictability.

### **Equal Pay**

#### **➤ Provide Equal Pay for Equal Work for all New Jersey's working women**

Despite the Federal Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Lily Ledbetter Act, and the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination, wage discrimination still persists and women in New Jersey still earn only 82 cents on the dollar compared to men. For women of color, the wage gap in New Jersey is far worse with African American women earning 58 cents and Latinas earning 43 cents. Our laws fail to provide equal pay for jobs that are comparable but not identical, back pay restoration beyond two years even when discrimination has been found over longer periods of time, and lack adequate fines to dissuade companies from breaking the law. Wage discrimination impacts the economic security of families today and directly affects retirement security for women's futures, and is a simple matter of economic justice.