DMEC
2026 ANNUAL
CONFERENCE

Why Employers Also Benefit from Statutory Paid Leave Programs

2026 DMEC Annual Conference

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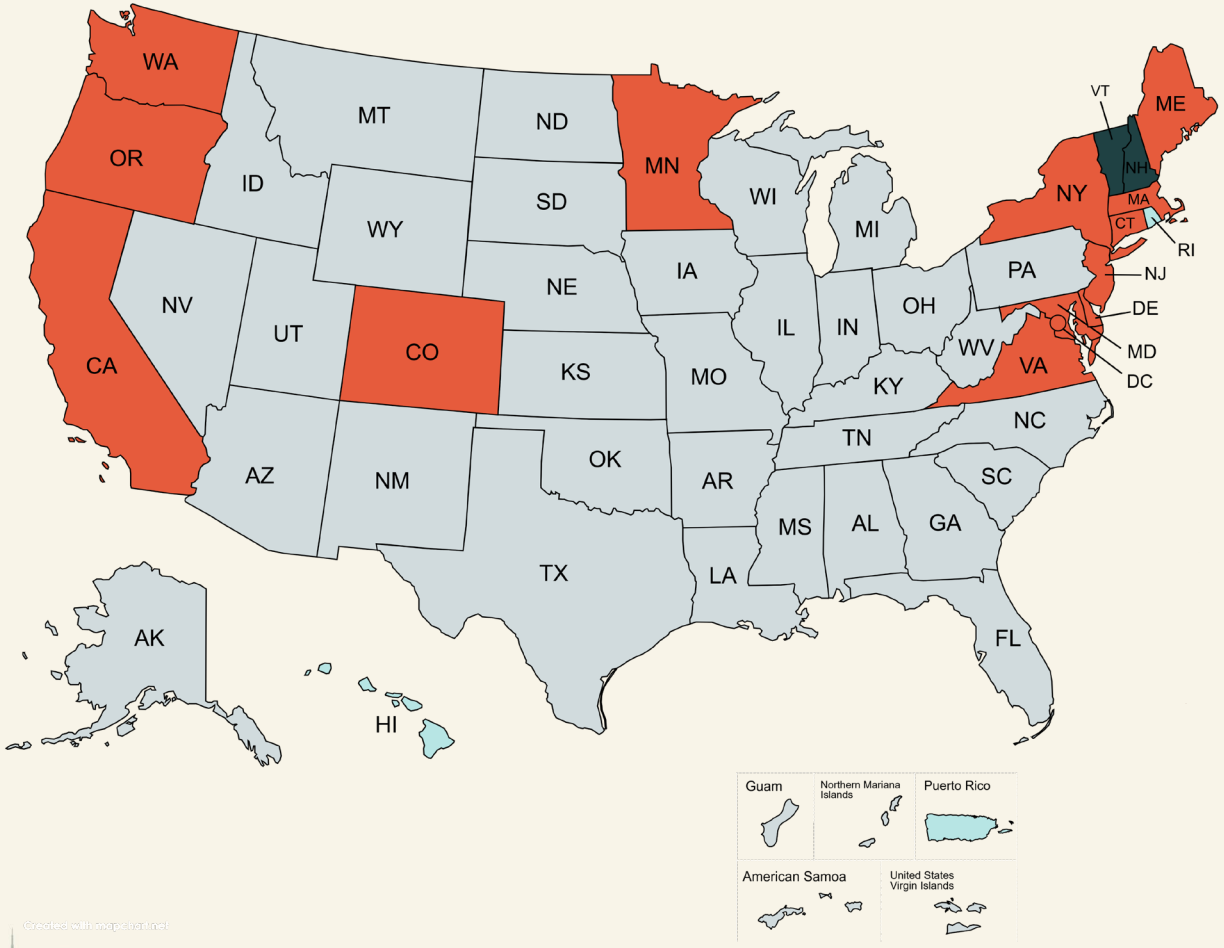
The following information is provided for informational purposes only.
Employers should always consult with their counsel for any statutory requirement.

Agenda

1. Current Statutory Paid Leave Landscape
2. Employers' Concerns: What We Heard
3. Need for Statutory Paid Leave
4. How Employers Can Help
5. Employer Takeaways



Current Statutory Paid Leave Landscape



Statutory Disability and Paid Family and Medical Leave

- Statutory Disability only
- Statutory Paid Leave
- Voluntary program for employers and employees to opt in

Polling Question 1

In how many states or jurisdictions do you have employees that are covered under a mandatory statutory paid leave program?

A. None
B. 1-2
C. 3-5
D. 6 or more



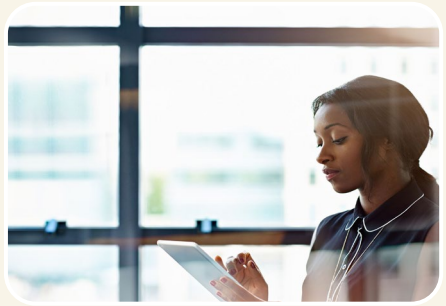
Polling Question 2

As you think about pending or recently passed legislation, what concerns you most as an employer?

A. Costs
B. Productivity
C. Compliance
D. Administrative burden
E. Abuse of leave
F. All of the above



Employers' Concerns: What We Heard



Costs and Funding



Business Impacts



Abuse of Leave



Compliance

What We Heard – Costs and Funding

"Each additional workplace mandate approved by the state legislature increases the cost separation between Connecticut and other states and makes states that do not impose such mandates more attractive as places to conduct business."

"Employer contributions or premiums, which can strain budgets, particularly for small businesses with fewer than 25 employees."

"New state employees would need to be hired to implement and monitor the program, resulting in millions of dollars in start-up costs."

Source: Public testimony submitted in opposition to Public Act 2019-25

Polling Question 3

What percentage of small employers think that having access to paid family and medical leave is important to their employees' economic security?

A. 10%

B. 25%

C. 60%

D. 80%

Reality – Costs and Funding

We hired from the community, in 2021, Aflac hired **150** Connecticut workers to support the program, and the CT Authority hired **40** Connecticut workers.

For small businesses, public programs level the playing field by sharing costs (when allowed by regulation), allowing them to offer competitive benefits without disproportionate burdens.

Source: CTPL Internal Data 2021

Reality – Costs and Funding cont.

- **82% of small employers think that having access to paid family and medical leave is important to their employees' economic security.**

  Source: National Partnership for Women & Families. "Small Businesses Support a National Paid Family and Medical Leave Program." Published October 2024.

- **Nearly 80% of small owners support national programs.**

  Source: Survey conducted by Lake Research Partners on behalf of Small Business Majority and National Partnership for Women's and Families. Published October 2024.

- **92% of employees would be interested in paid family or medical leave.**

  Source: LIMRA EY 2025 Harnessing Growth Workforce Benefits Study 2025. Published July 2025.

What We Heard – Business Impacts

"How is a small business supposed to stay in business when it is possible for nearly its entire workforce to be out on leave for up to three months at a time? What assurance are there guaranteeing the continuity of operations for small businesses, particularly those with specialized staffing needs?"

"Employers would bear the cost of hiring and training replacement workers while retaining employees out on leave, a burden that will fall particularly hard on small businesses like home care companies."

Source: Public testimony submitted in opposition to Public Act 2019-25

Reality – Business Impacts

The Connecticut Paid Leave Program is **100%** employee funded.

The Connecticut Paid Leave expense ratio vs. claims paid is under **10%**.

Employers can view it as a tool for enhancing workforce stability and performance.

Paid leave not only prevents burnout but also improves overall job satisfaction by giving employees financial security during illness or family care.

More than **three-quarters** also are convinced that paid family and medical leave boosts employee morale and productivity. Productivity often rises when more workers are able to take paid leave to manage their health and family needs: benefits to maternal, infant and child health; families' food security; and income stability.*

**Source: National Partnership for Women & Families. "Small Businesses Support a National Paid Family and Medical Leave Program." Published October 2024.*



Polling Question 4

What types of paid leave abuse are you most worried about?

A. Misuse of intermittent leave
B. Fraudulent medical certifications
C. Leave stacking
D. Broad covered relationships (i.e., relationships by affinity)



What We Heard – Abuse of Leave

"There are very few protections against fraudulent use of the program."

"Consider stronger provisions to discourage fraud."

"Including equivalent to family member makes it impossible for an employer to know whether a claim is legitimate."

Source: Public testimony submitted in opposition to Public Act 2019-25

Reality – Abuse of Leave

The CT Authority has worked with Aflac to take several measures to mitigate fraud or misrepresentation.

The average claim duration since inception of the Connecticut Paid Leave program is **7.38** weeks.

The fraud the CT Authority is seeing is from bad actors/identity theft.

Care of a family member leaves account for **14%** of our approved claim volume. We experienced a low volume of "affinity" as a covered relationship, as it represented less than **3%** of the claims.

Source: CT PL Internal Data 2026

What We Heard – Compliance

"Employers will be responsible for administrative compliance, such as transferring wage deductions to the state and managing workplace absences."

Source: Public testimony submitted in opposition to Public Act 2019-25

Reality – Compliance

Compliance is and should be a concern.

What you can do:

- Review all federal, state, municipal or employer-sponsored leaves to ensure proper alignment with PFML
- Use your resources – DMEC has great resources (podcasts, legislative updates, white papers, sample templates and forms, FAQ Friday, mental health, accommodation, medical certification resources)
- If you do have questions about your contributions or the leave requirements, contact us!



Polling Question 5

How many private-sector workers in the labor force are eligible for paid leave under one of the mandatory state programs?

A. 1/8
B. 1/4
C. 1/3
D. 1/2



Reality: The Need for Leave

Overall, paid leave (which includes maternity/paternity leave, sick leave and vacation leave) increased for both mothers and fathers between 2000 and 2024, from 29% to 58% for fathers and from 47% to 54% for mothers.

Source: National Partnership for Women & Families. "State Paid Leave Programs Cover Nearly One-Third of Workers in the United States." Published March 2026.



For mothers, the most common channel for paid leave is family leave while both family leave and vacation leave are most common for fathers.

Source: United States Census Bureau. 2024 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). Published July 2025.

What Made the Difference?

- Community outreach campaigns
- Proactive planning with good partners
- Education through several employer webinars
- Socialization



Before we move on, are there questions?



How Employers Can Help

Communicate

Don’t forget to communicate end-to-end and ensure everybody knows. Remind your employees about their rights under federal, state or municipal unpaid or paid leave laws. Ensure HR staff is aware for planning, supervisors for coverage and payroll team.

Educate

Provide information to the employee about how to apply for the statutory paid leave – state or the private plan. Create a resource for your employees on information about leave/where and how to apply.

Gather Feedback and Take Action

Survey your employees on their experience and provide feedback to the state or private plan.



How Employers Can Help cont.

Respond

Once on leave, respond promptly to any Employment Verification forms timely to ensure the accuracy of the information. Create a resource for your HR staff; don't fill out a form until there is a case filed.

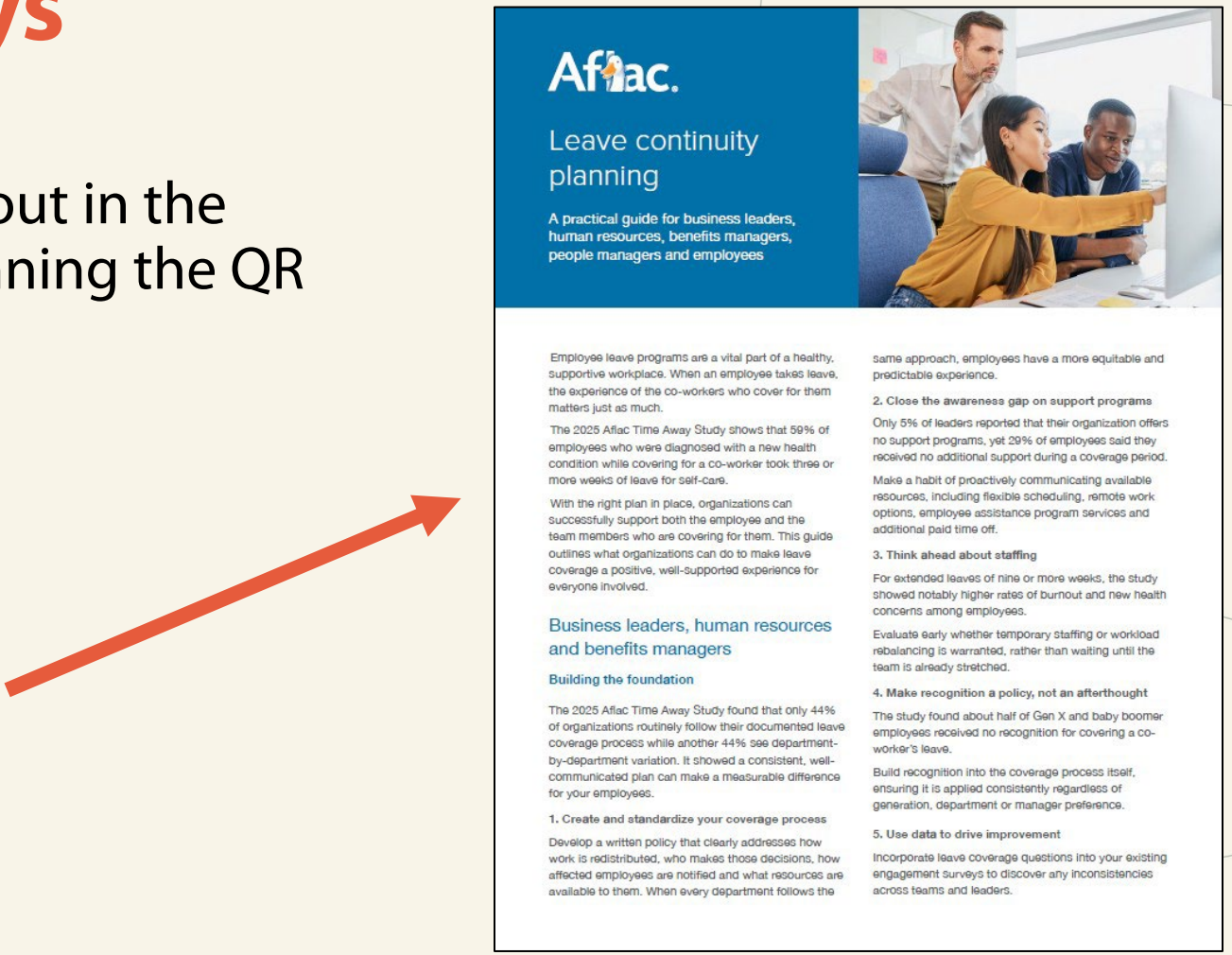
Be Engaged

Stay up to date on any changes to the program and ask questions or ask for guidance if you are unsure. We are here to help!



Employer Takeaways

You can locate a copy of the handout in the application or download it by scanning the QR code.



Aflac.

Leave continuity planning

A practical guide for business leaders, human resources, benefits managers, people managers and employees

Employee leave programs are a vital part of a healthy, supportive workplace. When an employee takes leave, the experience of the co-workers who cover for them matters just as much.

The 2025 Aflac Time Away Study shows that 59% of employees who were diagnosed with a new health condition while covering for a co-worker took three or more weeks of leave for self-care.

With the right plan in place, organizations can successfully support both the employee and the team members who are covering for them. This guide outlines what organizations can do to make leave coverage a positive, well-supported experience for everyone involved.

Business leaders, human resources and benefits managers

Building the foundation

The 2025 Aflac Time Away Study found that only 44% of organizations routinely follow their documented leave coverage process while another 44% see department-by-department variation. It showed a consistent, well-communicated plan can make a measurable difference for your employees.

1. Create and standardize your coverage process

Develop a written policy that clearly addresses how work is redistributed, who makes those decisions, how affected employees are notified and what resources are available to them. When every department follows the same approach, employees have a more equitable and predictable experience.

2. Close the awareness gap on support programs

Only 5% of leaders reported that their organization offers no support programs, yet 29% of employees said they received no additional support during a coverage period.

Make a habit of proactively communicating available resources, including flexible scheduling, remote work options, employee assistance program services and additional paid time off.

3. Think ahead about staffing

For extended leaves of nine or more weeks, the study showed notably higher rates of burnout and new health concerns among employees.

Evaluate early whether temporary staffing or workload rebalancing is warranted, rather than waiting until the team is already stretched.

4. Make recognition a policy, not an afterthought

The study found about half of Gen X and baby boomer employees received no recognition for covering a co-worker's leave.

Build recognition into the coverage process itself, ensuring it is applied consistently regardless of generation, department or manager preference.

5. Use data to drive improvement

Incorporate leave coverage questions into your existing engagement surveys to discover any inconsistencies across teams and leaders.

Employer Takeaways

Creating a Leave Continuity Plan

1. **Create and standardize coverage process.**
2. **Close awareness gap on support programs.**
3. **Think ahead about staffing.**
4. **Make recognition a policy, not an afterthought.**
5. **Use data to drive improvement.**



Final Questions?

Products and services are administered by Continental American Insurance Company. In New York, products and services are administered by American Family Life Assurance Company of New York. In California, coverage is offered by Continental American Life Insurance Company. Products may not be available in all states and may vary depending on state law.
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