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**Labor Economist – Costs vs. Benefits;**

**Long term vs. Short term;**

**Costs of action vs. Costs of doing nothing ...**

**Research the labor market, trends in work, hours, schedules, flexibility and job quality**

**Teach classes here in economics, labor economics/labor markets, work-life (labor and employment relations course)...and family in an economic context (HDFS)**

**Periodically present research relevant to State/ Federal bills (e.g., FLSA, Overtime, Fair Workweek...)**

**Outline: Context of today's labor market, how SNLA fits with research re:**

**the effects of workplace flexibility,**

**patterns disparities in other types of leave**

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**Outline:**

***Context of today's labor market,***

***How SNLA fits with research re: the effects of workplace flexibility and patterns and disparities in other types of leave,***

***Potential Cost and Disruption for Employers is likely to be minimal and manageable***

***Fits with other efforts to provide workers a floor of protections and support***



**PennState**

# What Is the SNLA?

- Covers family and caregiving needs of the employed that are **not** included in FMLA—**daily, occasional**, for FMLA eligible employees in covered firms
- Up to 24 hours of **job-protected** leave per year
- Typically **unpaid, short-duration, intermittent leave** -- not weeks, just **chunks of hours**

# Context: Why Now?

- Labor Force Participation stagnant; **Weakened** Labor Force Attachment?
  - Mothers' LFP is no long rising
  - Parenthood Pay Penalty
- Work-Life-Family conflict levels – intensifying particularly for dual-earner (or single-headed) households: unmet needs to reconcile both:
  - time** conflict and **role** conflict
  - exacerbated by nonstandard work schedules
- Increasing Value attached to **flexibility** --
  - One of the significant explainers of workers' JQ rating – positive for having control and negative for no control (employer flexibility/instability)
  - **Importance** -- rank is high (IL survey) -- after pay and security
- Money and Time Expense of Child (day) care is inhibiting full labor force participation
- Paid Leaves – Vacation and Sick Time – inclusiveness higher among the high wage/salary workers – not universal, particularly for PAID PTO
- 1 in 7 workers provided unpaid eldercare (>65), spending an average of almost hours hours per day providing this care (averages for 2023-24)
- About 4 in 10 workers have their daily/weekly work schedule timing determined completely by their employer (and only single digit % completely control their own schedule \_

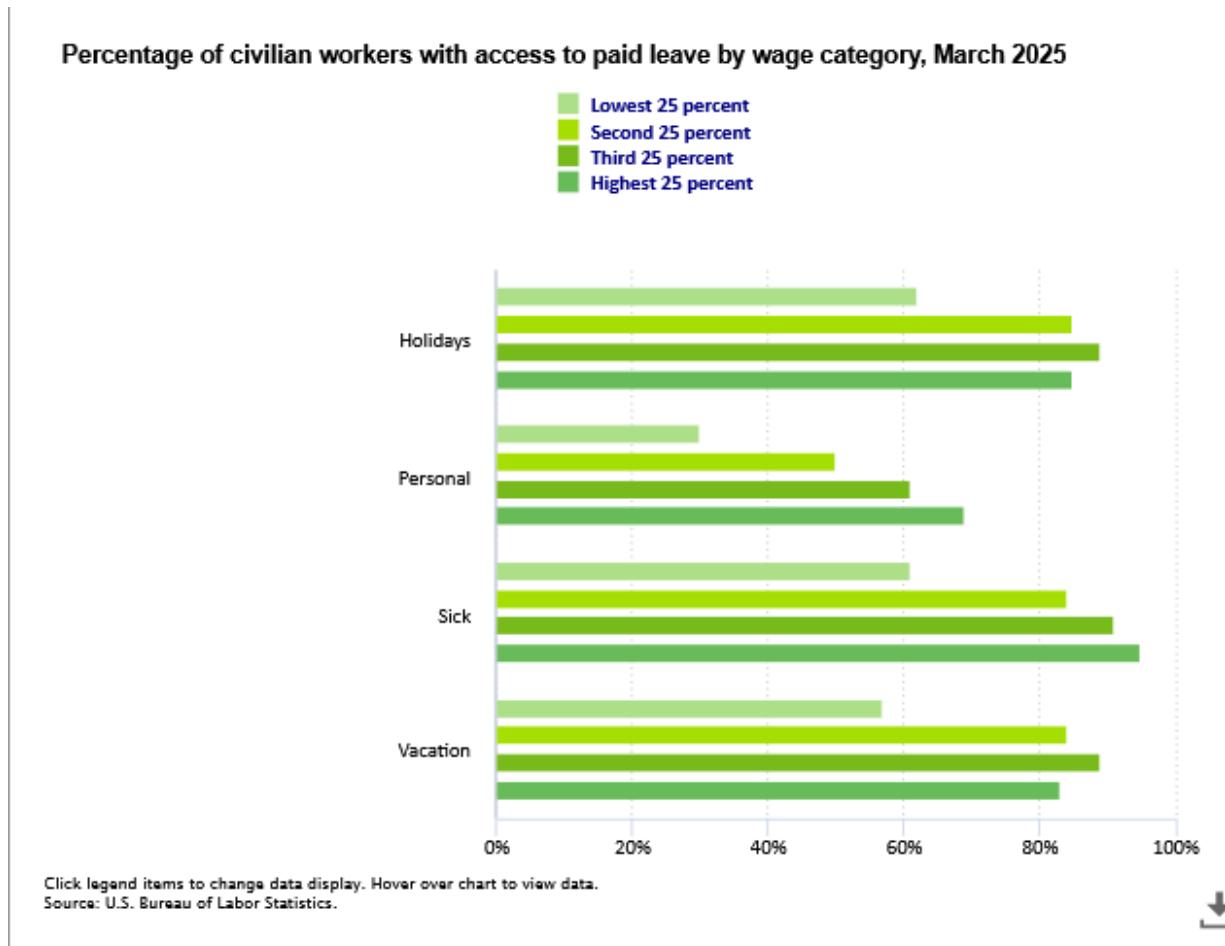
# Small Necessities Leave Act (SNLA)

- This soft-touch, modest, job-protected leave has **both a "public goods" case and a "business case"**-- so on balance, good for all those with caregiving responsibilities, for labor force participation and no net harms to employers
- Research-evidence -- most salient type of "flexibility" for people working is **"taking time (or, a few hours) off during the workday for family or personal matters"** -- even more than "flexitime" schedules
  - **Kim, Henly, Golden and Lambert (2020): taking time off during the workday (very hard, somewhat hard, not too hard, not hard at all)** -- 42% = **"not hard at all"**
  - is associated not only with several positive **outcomes** for workers -- lower work-to-family **conflict**, less work **stress**, increased family satisfaction, more time with children, but also with positive work-related outcomes, such as **job satisfaction**, **lower turnover intentions**, and **organizational commitment**
  - NIOSH researchers: **Taking time off decreased the likelihood of job stress** by 56% and days with activity limitations by 24%, and more than doubled the **likelihood of job satisfaction**.
  - Flexibility actually slightly more accessible among men than women, entirely due to having more "informal" flexibility – women actually more "formal" flexitime...

Key Potential Benefits for Workers & Families – no hard evidence yet re: MA's SNLA – needs to be established with ( \$\$ for) a before and after study, panel, RCT!)

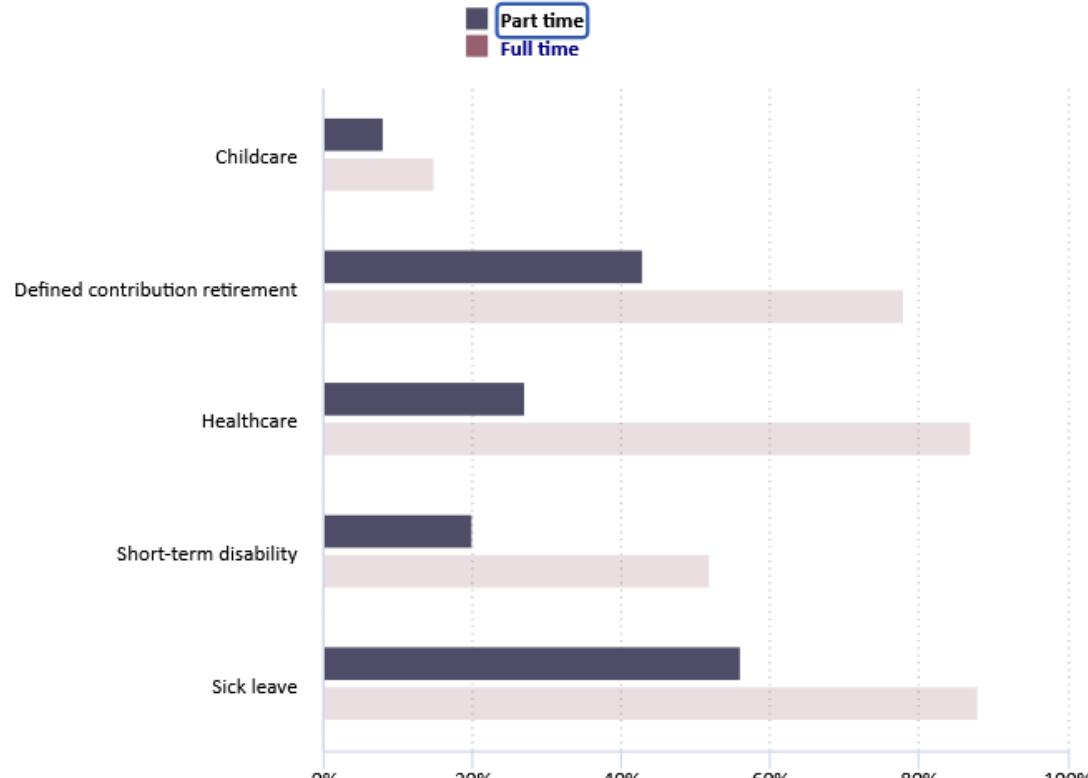
- Reduces work–family conflict and work stress
- Facilitates more direct caregiving for children and elderly relatives
- Supports parental engagement time and family stability

Many workers — especially **low-wage earners and part-time employees** — lack access to paid leaves — **all 4-5 types of leaves** -- and are often forced to **choose** between caregiving duties and earning income...thus lack a formal support system for attending to kinds of family-critical events.



# Part time – disproportionately women (though some younger men) -- in particular have less access – including childcare supports and sick leave

Percentage of private industry workers with access to employer-provided benefits by work status, March 2025



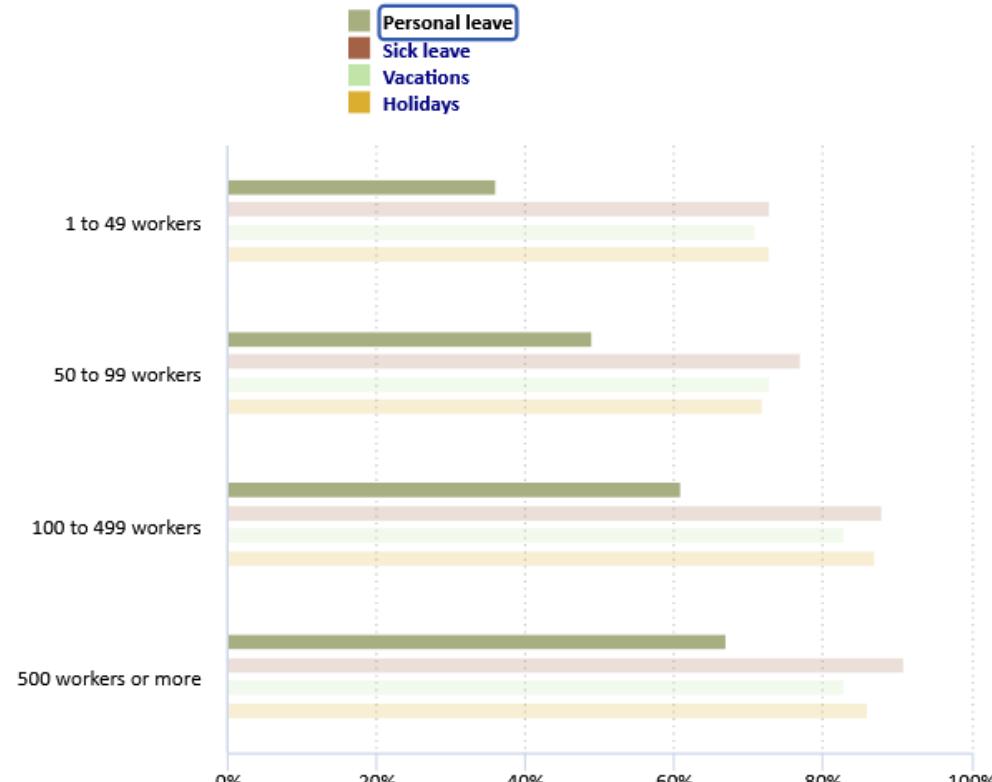
Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.



# Smaller size firms in particular offer less leaves, especially "personal"

Percentage of civilian workers with access to paid leave benefits by establishment size, March 2025



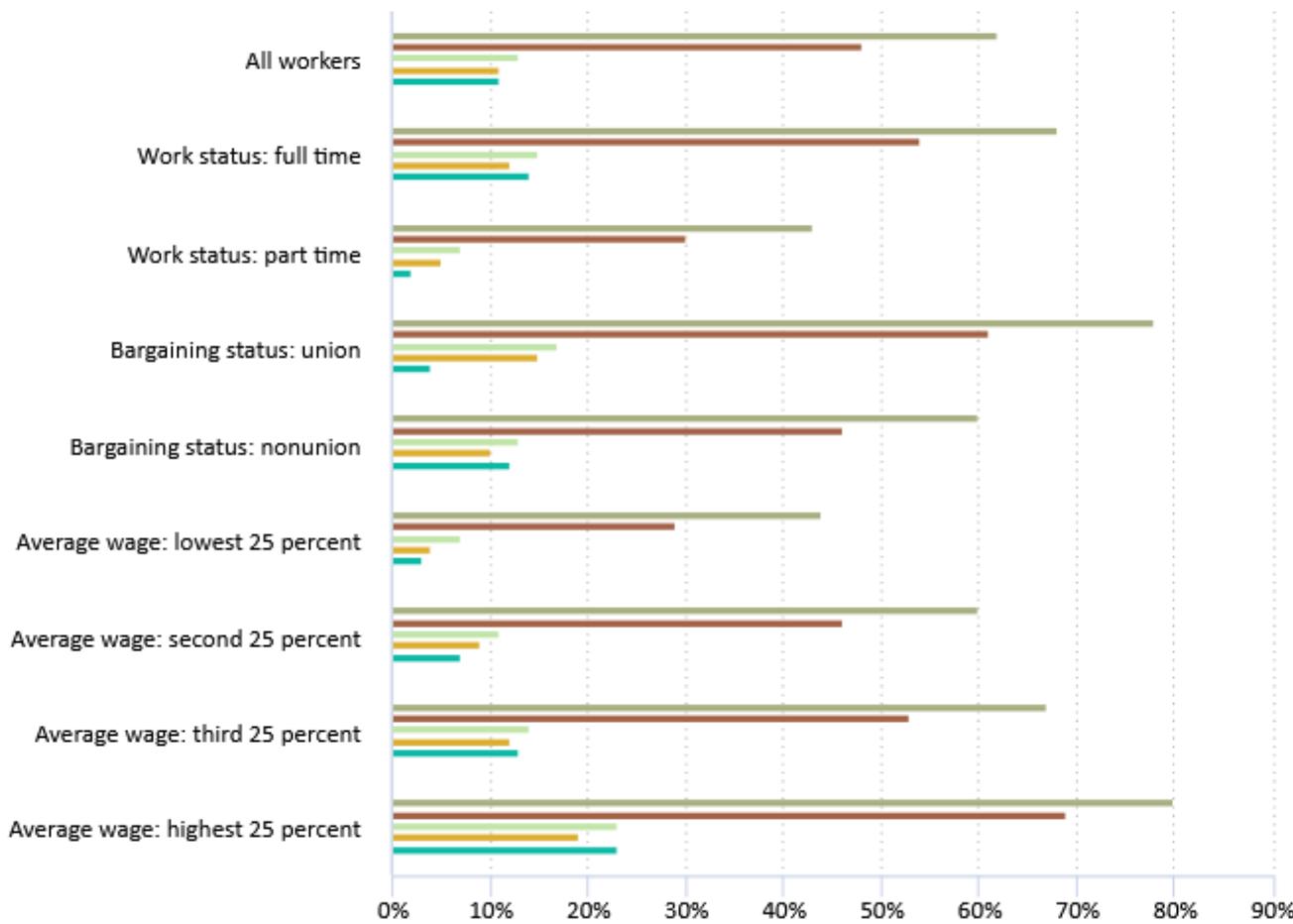
Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.



Percentage of civilian workers with access to quality-of-life benefits by worker characteristic, March 2025

- Employee assistance programs
- Wellness programs
- Childcare
- Subsidized commuting
- Flexible workplace



Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.



A Typical Survey: LiveCareer's [Motherhood on Mute Report](#), based on a survey of nearly 1,000 working mothers in the U.S.,

- **55% reduced hours or switched jobs due to childcare costs, while 36% left the workforce entirely.**
- 96% have faced pushback for consistently leaving work at a set time due to child-related responsibilities (e.g., for school pickup).

**Thus, (in) flexibility determines access to opportunity. When schedules are rigid, childcare is costly, and bias goes unaddressed, career progression becomes conditional on availability rather than performance.**

#### **Often, Time Off Exists on Paper, Less in Practice**

...many employees report that taking it feels risky rather than restorative.

- 29% of workers say fear of layoffs has made them **hesitant to take time off**.
- 33% feel **pressured to not use all PTO** accrued and 9% say their workplace actively discourages using all PTO earned.

💡 Though SNLA is unpaid and small, **paid leave research gives some insight into what happens when leave is more accessible:**

- Paid family and medical leave **improves child health outcomes** (lower infant mortality, reduced hospitalizations) and family well-being. ([SRCD](#))
- Studies of state PFL programs (e.g., California and New Jersey) indicate these policies **increase labor force attachment** and make it easier for caregivers to combine work with caregiving duties. ([Urban Institute](#))
  - Paid leave is associated with **improved financial security and reduced hardship** compared to unpaid leave. ([Springer](#))

📌 Thus, SNLA's *intent* aligns with broader evidence on caregiving supports.

Topic	Research Findings	Relevance to SNLA
SNLA itself	No direct empirical evaluation yet	Suggests research gap
FMLA studies	Unpaid leave often underutilized, eligibility limits	SNLA may face similar use limits
Paid family leave studies	Positive health, economic, and employment outcomes	Shows direction of benefits when leave is effective
Caregiving burden research	Empirical evidence of stress and productivity loss	Supports need for work–family leave policies

# Legitimate Concerns & Challenges

- **Administrative and tracking burden** for employers of the 24 hours (HR dept)
- **Scheduling and coverage** issues,
  - especially for small firms
- Perceived risk of **misuse** (a fear more than evidence-based)
- Requiring employers to provide *job protection* (can return to their position),
  - But **do not require additional wage replacement beyond what already exists** in accrual banks unless the employee chooses to use existing PTO off.
  - This means the **direct cost to employers would be minimal**

# Potential Longer Term Benefits for Employers of Leaves

– already offered to some privately, case by case

- Improves **retention** and reduces turnover costs
- Boosts morale and **job satisfaction**
- Enhances recruitment competitiveness
- **Limits disruption** compared with **longer** leaves
- Leave policies, including intermittent or partial-day leaves, allows employers to **maintain workforce continuity** without extensive operational disruption.
- Experience with case of paid **sick** leave and other job-protected leave laws shows that **employers rarely incur significant costs** when offering modest leave benefits.
  - Though often more generous than unpaid leave provisions — *adds little to no net cost* after accounting for reduced employee turnover, easier recruitment, and higher eventual productivity.
  - Research on federal **FMLA administration** shows that **the majority of employers report that compliance and administrative tasks (tracking leave, determining eligibility) are “very easy” or “somewhat easy,”** and most report **no or only small increases in costs:** One key study: **89% of employers reported no or only “slight” increases in administrative costs** linked to leave tracking.

## EU EU-Level Minimum Standards

The EU Work-Life Balance Directive (2019/1158) sets **minimum rights** for workers :  
**Carers' Leave**

- Workers who provide *personal care or support* to a relative or person in the same household are entitled to **at least 5 working days of carers' leave per year**.
  - This is a *specific right* that resembles SNLA's job-protected leave for caregiving purposes, though SNLA allows up to 24 hours (about 3 days of work) focused mainly on **routine activities** like attending appointments.
- Under the EU rule, the minimum leave is broader, covering any *serious care need*.

## ✓ Right to Request Flexible Working Arrangements

- Workers who care for children (up to at least age 8) or relatives in need of care can **request reduced hours, flexible schedules, or flexible work location**.

## ✓ Time Off for Urgent Family Reasons

- EU law also includes **leave for urgent family situations** (e.g., illness, accident), though national implementation details vary.

# Country Examples (Selected)

- Germany: 10 days paid short-term care leave + long-term reduced hours
- Italy: Up to 3 paid care days per month
- Netherlands: Care leave tied to contracted hours (~70% pay)
- Sweden: Very generous paid caregiving leave
- Thus SNLA and US relatively modest!

## **US Broad Policy Context – Blends with Other Worker Supports/Protections**

- 1) Part Time Worker Bill of Rights – with Right to Request, Right to Refuse (MOT)**
- 2) Fair Workweek/Schedules that Work Act – Predictability, Stability, Pay**
- 3) PA Senate Bill 906 – House Bill 200 (the *Family Care Act*)** would establish a Pennsylvania Family and Medical Leave Program with a dedicated fund and benefits for workers taking leave for family or medical reasons – 14 other states currently provide "paid" family leave.
- 4) PA Senate Bill 13 (Healthy Employee and Healthy Workplace Act)** – would impose a mandatory statewide employer-paid sick leave requirement for workers in PA (similar to Philadelphia's **House Bill 899** – similarly would provide a right to paid sick leave and create enforcement mechanisms and penalties for noncompliance.
- 5) Wage Theft & Worker Reporting Protection** – PA Senate Bill 487
- 6) 4-Day Workweeks – Pilot** – PA House Bill 884
  - Offer state tax credits for employers that participate and adopt a 4-day (32-hour) schedule for their employees.
    - With a mechanism for applications and evaluations of participating employers.

# Policy Takeaways

- SNLA fills critical gaps left by FMLA
- Modest leave delivers meaningful well-being gains for those that lack this now
- Pairing with other paid leave options improves equity in access to leaves and facilitates daily work-life "fit"