



# NAWBO

National Association of Women Business Owners

**National Association of Women Business Owners  
Statement for the Record  
House Education and Workforce Committee,  
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections**

**Hearing: Balancing Careers and Care:  
Examining Innovative Approaches to Paid Leave  
February 24, 2026  
Washington, D.C.**

The National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) respectfully submits the following Statement for the Record in response to the House Education and Workforce Committee, Subcommittee on Workforce Protections hearing held on February 24, 2026.

NAWBO was founded in 1975 in Washington, D.C., as the first advocacy organization for all women business owners. Nearly fifty years later, we are proud to carry on the tradition of our founders and represent the more than 13 million women business owners in this country. We are encouraged by the bipartisan and bicameral efforts to find solutions at the federal level for paid leave that is accessible, flexible and that meets the needs of businesses and workers. For the last several years we have worked closely with the House and Senate Working Groups on Paid Leave as they explore solutions to expand access to paid leave for all Americans.

NAWBO hopes Congress can continue to work toward a bipartisan solution that allows small businesses to access a paid leave system that works financially for themselves and their workforce. Policies that include support for self-employed individuals and working families through programs like paid family leave help address the economic needs of our business owners and workforce while at the same time helping ensure small business owners can compete against their larger counterparts. Indeed, nearly 40% of NAWBO respondents in a recent 2026 nationwide survey reported that offering paid family and medical leave benefits helps them retain workers, while nearly 33% said

that offering these benefits helps them attract workforce talent. 35% of those surveyed said that offering these benefits helps improve employee goodwill and morale.

Yet, offering paid leave remains out of reach for most women business owners. The 2026 NAWBO survey shows that less than one in four women business owners (19%) provide paid family medical leave. Moreover, according to a 2025 NAWBO survey, over 45% of those surveyed reported the costs of providing paid family leave benefits are too high.

Women business owners need solutions to paid leave that address the economic realities of running a business. They also want a system that works across state lines and addresses the challenges of navigating a patchwork of state programs. NAWBO applauded the introduction last year of the bipartisan *More Paid Leave for More Americans Act* which supports state innovation while also working toward greater coordination and consistency among the growing number of state-level paid leave programs. We were pleased to see the needs of small and medium size business owners discussed during last week's hearing where testimony reflected the unique burdens facing small employers seeking to offer paid leave, including limited or non-existent HR capacity, multi-state compliance challenges, and insufficient capital to administer paid leave programs. Policy solutions like those reflected in the *More Paid Leave for More Americans Act* are an important step forward in allowing more business owners to offer paid family medical leave to more workers.

NAWBO will continue to work to support this legislation and other efforts to help ensure small employers can offer these critical benefits to their workers while also remaining competitive with large employers. We look forward to helping advance the *More Paid Leave for More Americans Act* and to collaborating with the House and Senate Working Groups as they continue to develop bipartisan solutions to paid leave.