

Oral Testimony by Jane Waldfogel to  
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Worker and Family Support

March 7, 2019

Chairman Davis, Ranking Member Walorski, and other Members,

Good afternoon and thank you for inviting me to speak with you today.

I've spent the past 25 years studying policies to support working families and promote child health and development. These policies are a pressing concern because in the majority of American families, unlike in the past, it is no longer commonplace for there to be a stay-at-home caregiver who can take care of a newborn baby, an ill child, a disabled spouse, an elderly relative, or a family member being deployed or returning from the military.<sup>1</sup> This trend is not going to change – most two parent families need to have both parents in the labor market, and of course difficulties in balancing the competing needs of work and family are even more acute among low income and single parent families.<sup>2</sup>

Yet our public policies have not kept pace with this new demographic reality. The Family and Medical Leave Act provides only unpaid leave, and to only about 60% of the workforce.<sup>3</sup> Federal child care subsidies reach only about 15% of eligible low-income families who need them.<sup>4</sup>

Employer policies address some of the gap but mostly for more advantaged employees. While 40% of employees have access to some paid leave they can use for maternity, paternity, or to care for a seriously ill family member, those who are low-income, part-time, or Hispanic are much less likely to be covered.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Waldfogel (2006). *What Children Need*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Liana Fox, Wen-Jui Han, Christopher J. Ruhm, and Jane Waldfogel (2013). "Time for Children: Trends in the Employment Patterns of Parents, 1967-2009." *Demography* 49(4): 25-49.

<sup>2</sup> Liana Fox, Wen-Jui Han, Christopher J. Ruhm, and Jane Waldfogel (2013). "Time for Children: Trends in the Employment Patterns of Parents, 1967-2009." *Demography* 49(4): 25-49. Jane Waldfogel (2009). "The Role of Family Policies in Anti-Poverty Policy." In Maria Cancian and Sheldon Danziger (eds). *Changing Poverty, Changing Policies*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob Alex Klerman, Kelly Daley, and Alyssa Pozniak (2012). "Family and Medical Leave in 2012: Technical Report." U.S. Department of Labor <https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/fmla/fmla-2012-technical-report.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Ajay Chaudry, Taryn Morrissey, Christina Weiland, and Hirokazu Yoshikawa (2017). *Cradle to Kindergarten: A New Plan to Combat Inequality*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Only a tiny share of employees – about 10% - receive any help from their employers in paying for child care.<sup>6</sup>

Yet we know from a large body of research that these policies matter for the well-being of employees and their families.<sup>7</sup> While much of the early research came from other countries like the UK and Canada, we also now have more than a decade of evidence from California whose first-in-the-nation paid family leave law came into effect in 2004.<sup>8</sup> When employees have access to paid family leave, they are more likely to take leave to care for a family member or for themselves, and they are more likely to be employed and have higher earnings afterwards.<sup>9</sup> Mothers who have access to paid leave are less likely to be depressed after a birth and also breastfeed for longer.<sup>10</sup> Fathers who take longer leaves are more likely to be engaged in caring for their children months later.<sup>11</sup> When more paid leave is available, rates of infant mortality and hospitalizations fall.<sup>12</sup> At the other end of the lifecycle, so too do nursing home admissions.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ann P. Bartel, Soohyun Kim, Jaehyun Nam, Maya Rossin-Slater, Christopher J. Ruhm, and Jane Waldfogel (2019). “Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Access to and Use of Paid Family and Medical Leave: Evidence from Four Nationally Representative Datasets.” *Monthly Labor Review* U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics <https://doi.org/10.21916/mlr.2019.2>.

<sup>6</sup> Ann P. Bartel, Elizabeth Doran, and Jane Waldfogel (2019). “Gender in the Labor Market: The Role of Equal Opportunity and Family-Friendly Policies.” Paper prepared for *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*. Lena Hipp, Taryn W Morrissey, and Mildred E Warner (2017). “Who Participates and Who Benefits From Employer-Provided Child-Care Assistance?” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 79 (3): 614–35.

<sup>7</sup> Maya Rossin-Slater (2018). “Maternity and Family Leave Policy.” *Oxford Handbook of Women and the Economy*. Susan L. Averett, Laura M. Argys and Saul D. Hoffman (eds). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Christopher J. Ruhm and Jane Waldfogel (2012). “Long-Term Effects of Early Childhood Care and Education.” *Nordic Economic Policy Review* 1: 23-51.

<sup>8</sup> Ann P. Bartel, Charles L. Baum, Maya Rossin-Slater, Christopher J. Ruhm, and Jane Waldfogel (2014). “California’s Paid Family Leave Law: Lessons from the First Decade.” U.S. Department of Labor [https://www.dol.gov/wb/resources/california\\_paid\\_family\\_leave\\_law.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/wb/resources/california_paid_family_leave_law.pdf). Kelly Bedard and Maya Rossin-Slater (2016). “The Economic and Social Impacts of Paid Family Leave in California : Report for the California Employment Development.” California Employment Development Department.

<sup>9</sup> Charles L. Baum and Christopher J. Ruhm (2016). “The Effects of Paid Family Leave in California on Labor Market Outcomes.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 35 (2): 333–56. Ann P. Bartel, Maya Rossin-Slater, Christopher J. Ruhm, Jenna Stearns, and Jane Waldfogel (2018). “Paid Family Leave, Fathers’ Leave-Taking, and Leave-Sharing in Dual-Earner Households.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 37(1): 10-37. Maya Rossin-Slater, Christopher J. Ruhm, and Jane Waldfogel (2013). “The Effects of California’s Paid Family Leave Program on Mothers’ Leave-Taking and Subsequent Labor Market Outcomes.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 32(2): 224-245.

<sup>10</sup> Ann P. Bartel, Elizabeth Doran, Christopher J. Ruhm, and Jane Waldfogel (2019) “California’s Paid Family Leave Law Improves Maternal Psychological Health.” Paper to be presented at the Population Association of American Annual Meeting, Austin, TX, April 2019. Ann P. Bartel, Jessica Pac, Christopher J. Ruhm, and Jane Waldfogel (2019). “The Effects of California’s Paid Family Leave Law on Breastfeeding.” Paper presented at the Work and Family Researchers Network Conference, Washington DC, June 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Maria Carmen Huerta, William Adema, Janeen Baxter, Wen-Jui Han, Metta Lausten, RaeHyuck Lee, and Jane Waldfogel (2014). “Fathers’ Leave and Fathers’ Involvement: Evidence from Four OECD Countries.” *European Journal of Social Security* 16(4):308-347. Lenna Nepomnyaschy and Jane Waldfogel (2007). “Paternity Leave and Fathers’ Involvement with Their Young Children: Evidence from the ECLS-B.” *Community, Work, and Family* 10(4): 425-451. Sakiko Tanaka and Jane Waldfogel (2007). “Effects of Parental Leave and Working Hours on Fathers’ Involvement with Their Babies: Evidence from the UK Millennium Cohort Study.” *Community, Work, and Family* 10(4): 407-424.

<sup>12</sup> Ariel Marek Phil and Gaetano Basso (2019). “Did California Paid Family Leave Impact Infant Health?” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 38(1): 155-180. Maya Rossin (2011). “The Effects of Maternity Leave on Children’s Birth and Infant Health Outcomes in the United States,” *Journal of Health Economics* 30(2): 221-239. Christopher J. Ruhm (2000). “Parental Leave and Child Health.” *Journal of Health Economics* 19(6): 931-960.

The evidence on child care is also extensive and clear. Research from the landmark National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care, and many subsequent studies, have shown that high-quality child care improves children's health, cognitive development, and social development, with especially beneficial effects for disadvantaged children.<sup>14</sup> Yet too few Americans can afford quality child care, especially in early childhood when care is most expensive.<sup>15</sup> When more child care subsidies are available, parents are more likely to be employed, reducing poverty and promoting family economic stability, and more children receive child care and are in care of higher quality.<sup>16</sup> High quality care can play a crucial role in helping improve school readiness and in narrowing gaps in readiness.<sup>17</sup>

Opinion surveys consistently show that Americans favor paid family and medical leave.<sup>18</sup> They understand that the need is widespread and they appreciate the benefits. This is why 6 states to date – CA, RI, NJ, NY, WA, and MA – and the District of Columbia have enacted paid family and medical leave laws that provide a period of paid leave – to care for a newborn or a seriously ill child or family

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Joyce Shim (2016) "Family Leave Policy and Child Mortality: Evidence from 19 OECD Countries from 1969 to 2010." *International Journal of Social Welfare* 25(3): 215-221. Jenna Stearns (2015) "The Effects of Paid Maternity Leave: Evidence from Temporary Disability Insurance." *Journal of Health Economics* 43(C): 85-102. Sakiko Tanaka (2005). "Parental Leave and Child Health Across OECD Countries." *Economic Journal* 115(501): F7-F28.

<sup>13</sup> Kanika Arora and Douglas Wolf (2018). "Does Paid Family Leave Reduce Nursing Home Use? The California Experience." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 37(1): 38-62.

<sup>14</sup> NICHD Early Child Care Research Network (2002). "Early Child Care and Children's Development Prior to School Entry: Results from the NICHD Study of Early Child Care." *American Education Research Journal* 39:133-164. Hiro Yoshikawa, Christina Weiland, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Margaret R. Burchinal, Linda M. Espinosa, William T. Gormley, Jens Ludwig, Katherine A. Magnuson, Deborah Phillips, and Martha J. Zaslow (2013). "Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool," Society for Research in Child Development, Washington, D.C.

<sup>15</sup> Ajay Chaudry, Taryn Morrissey, Christina Weiland, and Hirokazu Yoshikawa (2017). *Cradle to Kindergarten: A New Plan to Combat Inequality*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation. Ludovica Gambaro, Kitty Stewart, and Jane Waldfogel (eds.) (2014). *Equal Access to Child Care*. Bristol: The Policy Press. Jay Bainbridge, Marcia Meyers, Sakiko Tanaka, and Jane Waldfogel (2005). "Who Gets an Early Education? Family Income and the Gaps in Enrollment of 3-5 Year Olds from 1968-2000." *Social Science Quarterly* 86(3): 724-745.

<sup>16</sup> Haksoo Ahn (2012). "Child Care Subsidy, Child Care Costs, and Employment of Low-Income Single Mothers." *Children and Youth Services Review* 34: 379-87. Jay Bainbridge, Marcia Meyers, and Jane Waldfogel (2003). "Child Care Reform and the Employment of Lone Mothers." *Social Science Quarterly* 84(4): 771-791. Yoonsook Ha and Daniel P Miller (2015). "Child Care Subsidies and Employment Outcomes of Low-Income Families." *Children and Youth Services Review* 59: 139-48. Chris M. Herbst (2010). "The Labor Supply Effects of Child Care Costs and Wages in the Presence of Subsidies and the Earned Income Tax Credit." *Review of Economics of the Household* 8 (2): 199-230. Katherine Magnuson, Marcia Meyers, and Jane Waldfogel (2007). "The Effects of Expanded Public Funding for Early Education and Child Care on Enrollment in Formal Child Care in the 1990s." *Social Service Review* 81(1): 47-83.

<sup>17</sup> Bruce Bradbury, Miles Corak, Jane Waldfogel, and Elizabeth Washbrook (2015). *Too Many Children Left Behind: The U.S. Achievement Gap in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Ajay Chaudry, Taryn Morrissey, Christina Weiland, and Hirokazu Yoshikawa. 2017. *Cradle to Kindergarten: A New Plan to Combat Inequality*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation. Christopher J. Ruhm and Jane Waldfogel (2012). "Long-Term Effects of Early Childhood Care and Education." *Nordic Economic Policy Review* 1: 23-51.

<sup>18</sup> Juliane Menasce Horowitz, Kim Parker, Nikki Graf, and Gretchen Livingston (2017). "Americans Widely Support Paid Family and Medical Leave, but Differ over Specific Policies." Pew Research Center. Aparna Mathur, Isabel V. Sawhill, Heather Boushey, Ben Gitis, Ron Haskins, Doug Holtz-Eakin., Harry J. Holzer, et al. 2017. "Paid Family and Medical Leave: An Issue Whose Time Has Come." AEI-Brookings Working Group on Paid Family Leave.

member, or when a family member is deployed or returning from in the military – with many more considering such legislation.

These policies are also endorsed by employers. My colleagues and I have been surveying employers in states with paid family and medical leave laws – focusing especially on small employers who are often missing from such surveys. In three states with paid leave laws – RI, NJ, and NY – we found that two-thirds of employers were supportive of the laws; another 15-20 percent were neutral.<sup>19</sup>

In summary, paid family and medical leave and quality affordable child care are not just vital supports for family economic well-being. They are also essential for the health and development of our children and for the health and well-being of our spouses, elderly relatives, and those serving in the military. We also know that we cannot leave these essential supports to employers to provide – the record is clear that they will supply little coverage, particularly for the workers with the greatest need for it. That’s why the American public and employers are looking to government to help.

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<sup>19</sup> Ann P. Bartel, Maya Rossin-Slater, Christopher J. Ruhm, and Jane Waldfogel (2017). “Employer Attitudes to Paid Family Leave.” Stanford University [https://web.stanford.edu/~mrossin/Bartel\\_et\\_al\\_EmployerAttitudesReport\\_Aug2017.pdf](https://web.stanford.edu/~mrossin/Bartel_et_al_EmployerAttitudesReport_Aug2017.pdf). See also evidence from California employers in Eileen Appelbaum and Ruth Milkman (2011) “Leaves That Pay: Employer and Worker Experiences with Paid Family Leave in California.” Center for Economic and Policy Research.