

Paid Family Leave Overture

Overture 1

The Hudson River Presbytery overtures the 223rd General Assembly to instruct the Board of Pensions to include 12-weeks of paid parental leave as part of the benefits package of all employees covered under their plans. This benefit shall be available to all parents of new children, regardless of how the child came to be in the family (including, but not limited to: birth, adoption, and fostering).

The Board of Pensions shall include in their paid parental leave policy the following:

- 12 weeks of paid parental leave required for all members of BOP
- Short term disability coverage if a church cannot afford the full 12 weeks at full pay and benefits
- Financial assistance for local congregations with a supply pastor
- Full leave to be given in the case of miscarriage, still birth, or infant death
- Timing of the parental leave may be taken concurrently or consecutively if 2 parents are present

Rationale:

The 221st General Assembly encouraged presbyteries and churches to create parental leave policies with the minimum of six weeks and 100% pay without using other forms of paid leave.¹

The 222nd General Assembly also voted to encourage the six agencies of the General Assembly (Board of Pensions, Foundation, Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program, Inc., Presbyterian Mission Agency, and Presbyterian Publishing Corporation) to improve their paid parental leave policies in accordance with the advice of the 221st General Assembly.²

As a denomination, we have affirmed the importance of supporting families. However, in practice, congregations are put in the precarious position of choosing between taking care of a new family, or taking care of the financial well-being of the congregation. Many churches cannot afford paid parental leave for their pastor(s) in addition to the cost of pulpit supply, yet many pastors cannot afford to be unpaid when they welcome a new member into the family. These choices are difficult ones that often lead to solutions which leave either the pastor or the congregation neglected, and lack witness to the love God, Parent of us all, has for the world. With the understanding that the Board of Pensions is well resourced, this overture accepts responsibility for supporting the BOP, and asks that its financial resources be allocated in a way that supports its pastors in small, struggling, or otherwise financially insecure churches.

¹ <https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/5121>

² <https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000035>

Without a paid parental leave policy, the PC(USA) forces parents to make a choice between proper health-care for themselves and their children, and adequate income to provide for their families. Without a paid parental leave policy, we uphold false narratives that describe men as “bread-winners” and require them to leave the child-raising to their spouses. Without a paid parental leave policy, we continue to uphold antiquated and unequal traditions which not only reinforce gender stereotypes, bringing harm to families and children, but fail to account for the many different kinds of families our denomination lifts up and celebrates.

However, in our Brief Statement of Faith, we confess as a Church, that the Holy Spirit
“calls **women and men** to all ministries of the church.

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the Spirit gives us courage
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In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives,
even as we watch for God’s new heaven and new earth,
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With a paid parental leave policy, we have the opportunity to live into this calling of courage in our ministries as pastors and congregations and in our daily lives as we grow our families and support one another in love. With a paid parental leave policy, we unmask the idolatry of unequal practices and are free to live holy and joyful lives – lives wherein all parents can bond with their children without fear of destitution, and the whole community can grow in love.

Supporting Statistics:

The lack of any kind of paid parental leave creates problems for both parents because, while women are medically cleared to return to work after about at least six weeks (if birth went perfectly), the majority of daycares refuse children before six weeks of age. This puts parents in a lose-lose situation as they must risk their health, their child’s care, and their families’ overall well-being if proper paid leave is unavailable. Elsewhere in creation, we

observe that God's creatures naturally keep their offspring close early in life.³ This policy simply acknowledges the health and financial needs of a new or growing family.

Numerous studies have shown the benefits of paid parental leave for both parents and their children. An increase of 10 weeks paid maternal leave has been associated with a 10% decrease in neonatal and infant mortality rate,⁴ and parental leave has been shown to be a cost-effective method for improving child health more generally.⁵ However, the benefits to child health and the decrease in infant mortality are only seen with an increase in paid parental leave.⁶ Moreover, studies that have analyzed the long-term benefits of paid parental leave have found benefits to women's mental health in older age and a decrease in high school dropout rates among their children.⁷

At least half of the contemporary seminary graduates are women, and a large portion of graduates (male and female) are in their child-bearing years.⁸ Some of these female colleagues must negotiate lower pay to receive adequate paid maternity leave in their calls, if they can get the maternity leave. Some of our female colleagues are being told they must prove they are worth the maternity leave. Many men have no leave guaranteed at all. This is a matter of gender justice in our denomination. Because women are the ones giving birth, most studies have focused on the relationship between a mother and her child. However, increases in paid parental leave continue to be met by increases in use of that leave among all parents, allowing parents of all genders to spend more time on their child's care, which has demonstrated health benefits for the child. Indeed, it has been shown that when fathers – or non-birthing parents – are offered comparable paid parental leave, the length of leave they take increases and their involvement in a child's care after the leave period increases.⁹ It is wholly regrettable that non-birthing parents (historically, men) have been denied such crucial bonding and care time with their families for so long. The need for a just paid parental leave policy at this time is urgent as more and more pastors reach retirement age and more and more younger pastors – those in their prime parenting years – seek and negotiate calls.

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Across the United States, a mere 14% of people have access to paid family leave.¹⁰ As stated above, this justice issue looms large for many workers, and the PCUSA is not currently acting as a faithful leader. In working toward a solution, it is the profound hope of many young pastors that the denomination will see the opportunity to lead the world to a more faithful, loving approach to family leave. With an awareness that the Board of Pensions is currently in good financial shape, many pastors, young and old, believe they will be good stewards of their resources in offering this benefit.

Overture 2

The Hudson River Presbytery overtures the General Assembly to amend G-2.0804 to read as follows (text to be added in italics):

The call shall include participation in the benefits plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including both pension and medical coverage, or any successor plan approved by the General Assembly, *and paid family leave of at least 12 weeks.*

Rationale:

The 221st General Assembly encouraged presbyteries and churches to create parental leave policies with the minimum of six weeks and 100% pay without using other forms of paid leave.¹¹

The 222nd General Assembly also voted to encourage the six agencies of the General Assembly (Board of Pensions, Foundation, Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program, Inc., Presbyterian Mission Agency, and Presbyterian Publishing Corporation) to improve their paid parental leave policies in accordance with the advice of the 221st General Assembly.¹²

As a denomination, we have affirmed the importance of supporting families. However, in practice, congregations are put in the precarious position of choosing between taking care of a new family, or taking care of the financial well-being of the congregation. Many churches cannot afford paid parental leave for their pastor(s) in addition to the cost of pulpit supply, yet many pastors cannot afford to be unpaid when they welcome a new member into the family. These choices are difficult ones that often lead to solutions which leave either the pastor or the congregation neglected, and lack witness to the love God, Parent of us all, has for the world.

¹⁰ <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/03/23/access-to-paid-family-leave-varies-widely-across-employers-industries/>

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Supporting Statistics:

The lack of any kind of paid parental leave creates problems for both parents because, while women are medically cleared to return to work after about at least six weeks (if birth went perfectly), the majority of daycares refuse children before six weeks of age. This puts parents in a lose-lose situation as they must risk their health, their child’s care, and their families’ overall well-being if proper paid leave is unavailable. Elsewhere in creation, we observe that God’s creatures naturally keep their offspring close early in life.¹³ This policy simply acknowledges the health and financial needs of a new or growing family.

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At least half of the contemporary seminary graduates are women, and a large portion of graduates (male and female) are in their child-bearing years.¹⁸ Some of these female colleagues must negotiate lower pay to receive adequate paid maternity leave in their calls, if they can get the maternity leave. Some of our female colleagues are being told they must prove they are worth the maternity leave. Many men have no leave guaranteed at all. This is a matter of gender justice in our denomination. Because women are the ones giving birth, most studies have focused on the relationship between a mother and her child. However, increases in paid parental leave continue to be met by increases in use of that leave among all parents, allowing parents of all genders to spend more time on their child's care, which has demonstrated health benefits for the child. Indeed, it has been shown that when fathers – or non-birthing parents – are offered comparable paid parental leave, the length of leave they take increases and their involvement in a child's care after the leave period increases.¹⁹ It is wholly regrettable that non-birthing parents (historically, men) have been denied such crucial bonding and care time with their families for so long. The need for a just paid parental leave policy at this time is urgent as more and more pastors reach retirement age and more and more younger pastors – those in their prime parenting years – seek and negotiate calls.

Across the United States, a mere 14% of people have access to paid family leave.²⁰ As stated above, this justice issue looms large for many workers, and the PCUSA is not currently

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acting as a faithful leader. In working toward a solution, it is the profound hope of many young pastors that the denomination will see the opportunity to lead the world to a more faithful, loving approach to family leave.

Overture 3

The Hudson River Presbytery overtures the General Assembly to amend G-3.0303 to read as follows (text to be added in italics):

Presbytery, being composed of the teaching elders and commissioners elected by the session of congregations within its district, has a particular responsibility to coordinate, guide, encourage, support, and resource the work of its congregations for the most effective witness to the broader community. In order to accomplish this responsibility, the presbytery has authority to:

- a. develop strategy for the mission of the church in its district;
- b. control the location of new congregations and of congregations desiring to move as well as to divide, dismiss, or dissolve congregations in consultation with their members;
- c. establish minimum compensation standards for pastoral calls and Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators within the presbytery, *to include Board of Pensions participation and paid family leave of at least 12 weeks*;
- d. counsel with a session concerning reported difficulties within a congregation, including:
 - (1) advising the session as to appropriate actions to be taken to resolve the reported difficulties,
 - (2) offering to help as a mediator, and
 - (3) acting to correct the difficulties if requested to do so by the session or if the session is unable or unwilling to do so, following the procedural safeguards of the Rules of Discipline;
- e. assume original jurisdiction in any situation in which it determines that a session cannot exercise its authority. After a thorough investigation, and after full opportunity to be heard has been accorded to the session, the presbytery may conclude that the

session of a congregation is unable or unwilling to manage wisely its affairs, and may appoint an administrative commission with the full power of session. This commission shall assume original jurisdiction of the existing session, if any, which shall cease to act until such time as the presbytery shall otherwise direct.

f. consider and act upon requests from congregations for permission to take the actions regarding real property as described in G-4.0206.

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