

## **Reflective Essay**

### **The Economics of Paid Parental Leave Policy**

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This past year, our group came together to work on a project for our Economic's course, Public Finance 633, regarding the economics of paid parental leave policies. We chose this policy subject to dissect due to our group's collective passion surrounding parental leave. The United States is a global outlier when it comes to guaranteeing paid parental leave for mothers and fathers, with no national law guaranteeing it. We decided to mainly focus on the economic implications, impacts, and long-term effects of parental leave, and not to discuss whether parental leave is necessary. Our group really enjoyed learning about this topic and gained several skills relating to research and analyzing useful statistics throughout the course of our work.

While our project did not require us to specifically collect data, we supplemented our research with several resources provided by our professor and K-State Libraries. We analyzed over fifty different parental leave policies, as well as relevant articles, academic papers, journals, and commentaries to gather information for us to compile into our presentation. A large majority of sources that we utilized for our presentation were found utilizing the K-State's Library research database, as well as Google Scholar. Additionally, we were recommended several papers and articles from our professor regarding this topic to enhance our research. Making sure that we were utilizing sources that had accurate, supported, and sound data was the most important aspect of our research. In order to ensure that we upheld this high-quality standard for the research that we utilized, we were intentional about fact-checking and analyzing all references

utilized by our potential sources. As a result, we chose twenty-three sources that solidified the body of our research.

The basis of our research strategy stemmed from a policy brief regarding parental leave from the United States Department of Labor. In the brief, it discussed an aspect of our project we had not yet considered: 'Why Paternal Leave for Fathers Is So Important For Working Families.' At first, we were focused on finding sources primarily discussing maternity leave, but the policy brief added the subject of paid leave for fathers, which shifted the importance of our project in a direction that required more thought and research. As we expanded our research to include both topics, we were able to access more sources that provided support for our presentation; for instance, we were able to utilize a study from 2018 that discusses how California implemented a Paid Family Leave Program to show the trends and disparities in the leave usage. This source ended up being a key focus of our presentation because it focuses on a state-level approach to paid family leave rather than a national-level approach, which we would not have found if we had not expanded our research to include paid paternity leave for fathers as well as mothers.

In conclusion, throughout the presentation, we educated our primary audience on how paid parental leave works, the benefits, the costs, and the economic theory behind Parental Leave Policies. Specifically, we focused on the economic implications of parental leave policies on the tolerance of gender-based discrimination, the impacts of fewer labor opportunities and lower incomes for disadvantaged workers due to parental leave policies, and longer-term effects of increased familial well-being and probable better futures for their children from parental leave policies. With the resources made

available to us through K-State Libraries, we were about to complete the thorough research needed to make this presentation successful.