



# Fund our future

## Local governments can use ARPA to provide paid leave for public workers

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At some point, we all need to take time away from work to recover from illness, to care for a sick or dying family member, or to care for and bond with a newborn or newly adopted child. Workers need time to care for themselves and their family without risking their job and economic security. This is why Ohioans — and everyone — should have paid family and medical leave.

But for decades, many employers and elected leaders have not devoted the resources necessary for all Ohioans to have the well-being and security that paid time off provides. Many local governments don't yet offer paid leave for public employees.

COVID-19 has highlighted how a lack of paid leave can cause a major disruption to the workforce and individuals' lives — disproportionately harming Black women workers because they are more likely to be paid low wages and less likely to have paid time off. [Women in Ohio](#)\* were more likely than men

to be laid off or forced to leave their jobs early in the pandemic, and many mothers were left with no other option but to step away from the workforce to care for their children and families. If U.S. women participated in the labor force at the same rate as women in Canada, Germany and the U.K. — nations with paid leave policies — Ohio would have [113,000 additional workers](#).

Now is the time for change. Cities and counties can lead the way by using American Rescue Plan Act

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(ARPA) funds to provide relief to city and county employees and their families by creating or expanding paid family and medical leave programs. [According to A Better Balance](#), a national advocacy organization, city and county officials can use rescue plan funds for a variety of purposes related to paid leave, including:

- **Paid family and medical leave:** Create or expand paid family and medical leave for municipal or county employees. Cities and counties can also use ARPA dollars to replenish existing paid leave funds.
- **Vaccine leave:** Create or expand vaccine leave programs for workers who get a COVID-19 vaccine or who need time to recover or care for a loved one who is recovering from side effects of the vaccine.
- **Contract requirements:** Broaden the impact of city or county paid leave policies by requiring contractors who are hired by the city or county to provide their workers with paid leave too. Cities and counties can use ARPA funds to cover costs related to the new requirements in the contract.
- **Research and start-up costs:** Conduct actuarial studies and cover research and start-up costs for new paid family and medical leave programs.

No one should have to choose between their economic security and caring for a family member. Paid family and medical leave can support working people and their families through difficult and inevitable life events. It can also help cities and counties attract and retain high-quality employees, increase equity and inclusion, and create a better workplace. Mayors, city council members, and county commissioners have an opportunity this year to strengthen or introduce new paid family and medical leave programs for their workforce.