



September 7, 2015

The Honorable Tony Mendoza
Chairman, Committee on Labor and Industrial Relations
California State Senate
1020 N Street, Room 545
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 908 (Gomez) Expansion of Paid Family Leave
AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chairman Mendoza:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), representing nearly 5,000 primary care and subspecialty pediatricians statewide supports AB 908 (Gomez), as amended on September 4, 2015. This bill would expand California's State Disability Insurance and Paid Family Leave (PFL) programs, providing economic security during some of life's most important events.

The United States is the only developed country in the world that does not offer a national paid family leave program. California's groundbreaking program, created by SB 1661 (Keuhl) was the first of only three states with PFL program in the United States. Although the PFL benefit enhances economic security for claimants who take leave to bond with children or care for sick family members, the benefit is simply insufficient to offer meaningful wage replacement for many workers, especially those in one-income households. PFL's wage replacement rate of 55%, coupled with increased financial burdens when having a baby or caring for a relative, makes it financially impossible for many workers to use PFL benefits.

This bill broadens the reach of wage replacement provisions by increasing the benefit to at least 60% of wages to every worker claiming PFL or DI benefits, as opposed to the 55% under current law. Lowest-income workers will receive 80% wage replacement rate in order to secure a basic income level to keep food on the table. Under AB 908 (Gomez), all PFL claimants will be eligible for a maximum of 8 weeks of PFL benefits, as opposed to 6 under current law.

According to the National AAP, "...Research demonstrates that when parents have paid family leave following the birth of a child, mother's breastfeed longer and parents are more likely to take children for immunizations and well-child care. The first weeks and months of a child's life are critical to development; because of the important role of parents in this early period, paid family leave can have effects that last throughout life. And when children are seriously ill or suffer from chronic illness, having a parent by their side makes a significant difference to their recovery. At the same time, paid leave reduces parents' stress levels in these difficult circumstances. Yet, lacking paid leave, many parents must make the heart wrenching decision to leave their sick children alone in the hospital in order to preserve their family's economic security."

As pediatricians, we see that longer paid leave is associated with a range of positive physical and mental health effects for families and children.

Therefore, AAP-CA supports AB 908 (Gomez) to protect and promote early child development and respectfully urges you to vote AYE on AB 908 (Gomez).

We thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of children across California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kris E. Calvin" followed by a horizontal flourish and a vertical line.

Kris Calvin
Chief Executive Officer
American Academy of Pediatrics, California