

**Delaware House of Representatives**

**Rep. Debra Heffernan**

**For Immediate Release:**

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**House Passes Healthy Delaware Families Act**

*SB 1(S) would provide paid family and medical leave for thousands of working families.*

DOVER – The House on Thursday passed landmark legislation that would make paid family and medical leave a reality for thousands of working Delaware families.

Senate Substitute 2 for Senate Bill 1, [The Healthy Delaware Families Act](https://legis.delaware.gov/BillDetail?LegislationId=79186), would provide eligible full-time workers in Delaware with up to 12 weeks of paid parental leave a year, and up to six weeks of paid family caregiving leave, paid medical leave or paid military leave every two years once fully implemented.

Workers forced to take extended time off from work due to a major family or medical event would be able to earn up to 80% of their average weekly wages through the state insurance program created by the bill.

“Delaware set the example by becoming one of the first states to establish paid parental leave [for state employees and teachers](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.delawareonline.com%2Fstory%2Fnews%2Fpolitics%2F2018%2F06%2F20%2Fpaid-parental-leave-state-workers-passes-delaware-general-assembly%2F718469002%2F&data=04%7C01%7CDrew.Volturo%40delaware.gov%7C239ebfc863414873e55608da0148a64b%7C8c09e56951c54deeabb28b99c32a4396%7C0%7C0%7C637823708907620891%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=eoofHC5vIbZfcgH4khr3i4QSdTbSwI9ByFtx86uUjy4%3D&reserved=0). Now, Delaware has done the right thing for thousands of private workers and ensured they have access to paid family and medical leave,” said **Rep. Debra Heffernan**, the bill’s lead House sponsor.

“Workers who have access to paid leave are happier, healthier, more productive and more likely to remain at their jobs. Our parental leave program has been an undeniable success, improving the health and wellbeing of families while boosting state employee recruitment and retention. I’m grateful to my colleagues – especially Sen. Sarah McBride for her leadership – and all the advocates who pushed for this to become a reality.”

The federal [Family and Medical Leave Act](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dol.gov%2Fagencies%2Fwhd%2Ffact-sheets%2F28-fmla&data=04%7C01%7CDrew.Volturo%40delaware.gov%7C239ebfc863414873e55608da0148a64b%7C8c09e56951c54deeabb28b99c32a4396%7C0%7C0%7C637823708907620891%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=FRsTEh0FbQiGQRZtiyylPCHqUUs413NDt8K1K%2F3mPFk%3D&reserved=0) currently provides some workers with job protections when they need extended absences of work for medical and family reasons. But workers are not guaranteed any pay during those 12 weeks, and a significant portion of Delaware’s workforce receives no protections at all under the law.

[Fewer than one in five workers nationwide](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bls.gov%2Fncs%2Febs%2Fbenefits%2F2019%2Femployee-benefits-in-the-united-states-march-2019.pdf&data=04%7C01%7CDrew.Volturo%40delaware.gov%7C239ebfc863414873e55608da0148a64b%7C8c09e56951c54deeabb28b99c32a4396%7C0%7C0%7C637823708907620891%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=qDNio7LsAtsyaYgEYRFQvYo1Cj58x1SnR%2Fh0sKfWSzE%3D&reserved=0) has access to paid family leave through their employer – a lack of financial security that costs working families in the United States about [$22.5 billion in lost wages each year](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.americanprogress.org%2Fissues%2Fwomen%2Fnews%2F2020%2F01%2F21%2F479555%2Frising-cost-inaction-work-family-policies%2F&data=04%7C01%7CDrew.Volturo%40delaware.gov%7C239ebfc863414873e55608da0148a64b%7C8c09e56951c54deeabb28b99c32a4396%7C0%7C0%7C637823708907620891%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=UMHl1udW5vtlaOBESMWLSJ4TIC4Hs4Q0QdVZMo1qZT0%3D&reserved=0). In Delaware, [nearly 60% of workers do not have access to even unpaid leave](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nationalpartnership.org%2Four-work%2Fresources%2Feconomic-justice%2Fpaid-leave%2Fpaid-leave-means-a-stronger-delaware.pdf&data=04%7C01%7CDrew.Volturo%40delaware.gov%7C239ebfc863414873e55608da0148a64b%7C8c09e56951c54deeabb28b99c32a4396%7C0%7C0%7C637823708907620891%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=dJLGdCk9RmAunvMxal9f%2Fu5VbPycGN6Xtgtd9weJ8Pg%3D&reserved=0) under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act.

“I want to thank my colleagues in the House for voting today to make sure thousands of working families in Delaware never again are forced to choose between earning a paycheck and welcoming a newborn or providing care to a family member fighting for their life,” said **Sen. Sarah McBride**, the prime sponsor of The Healthy Delaware Families Act. “The amendment added to Senate Bill 1 in the House is a result of the same thoughtful discussion and negotiation that has occurred throughout our state since Rep. Debra Heffernan and I first brought this landmark legislation forward almost one year ago. I look forward to quickly passing the amended version in the Senate and getting this critical employment benefit to Governor John Carney for his signature.”

The Healthy Delaware Families Act would provide an affordable solution to alleviate those financial pressures and unlock the economic potential of Delaware’s working families.

The bill would create a family and medical trust fund in Delaware modeled after similar programs already passed in nine other states and the District of Columbia. The program would be funded through payroll contributions, totaling less than 1% of an employee’s weekly pay and split evenly between a worker and their employer.

Businesses with fewer than 25 workers would not be required to participate in the medical and family caregiving component of the program, and businesses with fewer than 10 workers would not be required to participate in parental leave, but they may opt-in. Businesses with comparable benefits would be able to opt-out of the program in whole or in part.

SB 1(S) passed the House 29-11 and now heads to the Senate for final consideration. The bill will receive a final vote this afternoon. Upon passage, it will head to **Governor Carney** for his signature.

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