



Business and  
Professional  
Women's  
Foundation

For Release

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**Paid Leave is Good for Women and Employers**  
**Business and Professional Women Support FIRST Act and Healthy Families Act**

**Washington, DC** -- Business and Professional Women's (BPW) Foundation CEO Deborah L. Frett, in testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Education and Labor Subcommittee on Workforce Protections, supported two important work-life bills – the FIRST Act and the Healthy Families Act saying the laws “will start us on the road toward successful workplaces for employers and employees. A *successful workplace* is one where women can succeed and businesses can profit.”

“Business and Professional Women's Foundation strongly supports paid leave because many families can not afford to take the unpaid leave provided by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). As more working families struggle to make ends meet during the current economic downturn, it is especially important to ensure that workers are not forced to choose between their mortgage and their new children,” stated Frett.

“One of the most significant trends of the past 50 years has been the movement of women, especially mothers, into the paid labor force and the growth of women-owned businesses. Achieving a sustainable work-life balance is of paramount concern for working women and their families. Many women business owners tell us that they left their previous employer to start their own business to have greater work-life balance and they are more likely to offer that flexibility to their employees,” Frett continued.

“The **FIRST Act** will provide grants to the states so they can provide *paid* leave to working families for the birth or adoption of a child, to recover from serious illness or to care for a seriously ill family member. This reliance on a public-private partnership assures that the burden of providing a much-needed benefit does not fall solely on business.

“In addition, BPW Foundation is particularly supportive of the provisions in the FIRST ACT that allow workers to take time off to care for an injured service member or to deal with a family member's military deployment. BPW Foundation has a history of supporting women veterans. We have conducted groundbreaking research on the unique needs of women veterans transitioning from active duty to the civilian workforce and understand the strain on today's military families. This modification of the FMLA not only provides important benefits to military families, it also recognizes their sacrifice.

“BPW Foundation supports the **Healthy Families Act** and its goal to guarantee full time workers seven (7) paid sick days each year to recover from an illness, care for a sick family member, seek routine medical care, or seek assistance related to domestic violence.

Frett pointed out that there currently are no state or federal laws guarantying all workers a minimum number of paid sick days.

“The lack of this benefit has forced millions of Americans to choose between their paychecks and their health or the health of a family member.”

“The lack of paid sick days hurts families. It hurts moms and dads, kids and grandparents and singles – everyone gets sick. Unpaid time impacts the entire household because of the lost income. And not taking sick time impacts your health and ability to do preventive and wellness care. Without paid sick days, workers and families face financial difficulty in cases of illness or family health emergencies.

“The American family has changed dramatically in the last 50 years. Employee benefits should reflect the way we live now. Today, two-thirds of families with children have either two employed parents, or a single employed parent, most of who work full-time.

“The success of FMLA shows that business will not collapse if they provide time off to their employees. In fact 15 years after its passage, business has good things to say about FMLA.

“If we are really committed to the American family, we need leave policies that allow everyone to achieve the work-life balance that is so frequently talked about. If we are truly interested in fostering a strong and productive workforce and strong families, then we must ensure that workplace policies support employee success. And paid sick days is such a policy.” Frett concluded.

The full testimony can be accessed on the [BPW Foundation website](#).

The hearing will be held in 2175 Rayburn H.O.B, Washington, DC at 10:00 am, June 11, 2009 and webcast live at <http://edlabor.house.gov/hearings/2009/06/hr-2339-the-family-income-to-r.shtml>.

*Business and Professional Women's (BPW) Foundation is creating successful workplaces by focusing on issues that impact women, families and employers. Successful Workplaces are those that embrace and practice diversity, equity and work life balance. Through its groundbreaking research and unique role as a neutral convener of employers and employees, BPW Foundation strives to redefine today's workplace.*

*BPW Foundation's mission is to empower workingwomen to achieve their full potential and to partner with employers to build successful workplaces through research, education, knowledge and policy.*