

Crapo Statement at Hearing on Paid Leave

October 25, 2023

Washington, D.C.--U.S. Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) delivered the following remarks at a hearing entitled “Exploring Paid Leave: Policy, Practice, and Impact on the Workforce.”

As prepared for delivery:

“Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

“This is an important hearing, as nearly every working American will need to take leave from work at some point in their career. The Finance Committee has previously explored this topic, including holding a Subcommittee hearing in 2018 and convening a paid leave working group organized by then-Chairman Grassley and Chairman Wyden.

“I was a member of that bipartisan working group, which sought to find the most sustainable path forward on family leave policies. As I noted at the time, I am committed to addressing the needs of working Americans, both inside and outside the home, while also ensuring that businesses have the flexibility they need to succeed, particularly in today’s challenging economy.

“As we will hear today, paid leave can greatly benefit workers and their families—from improving employee morale to helping families meet caregiving responsibilities. However, there are many approaches to expanding paid leave, and the details matter.

“Employers across the country are struggling to fill vital roles in their organizations, with nearly 9.6 million jobs remaining unfilled nationally. In a recent survey from the National Federation of Independent Business, 43 percent of small business owners reported job openings they could not fill in the current period.

“In light of these workforce challenges, Congress must be careful not to interfere with employers’ existing paid leave offerings, which play an important part in their efforts to recruit and retain workers.

“According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2023, 78 percent of private sector workers have access to paid sick leave and 79 percent have access to paid vacation. Additionally, 73 percent of small employers offer paid time off to the majority of their full-time employees, and 67 percent offer two weeks or more of leave.

“Imposing a one-size-fits-all paid leave program could limit employers’ ability to offer paid leave policies that meet the unique needs of their workforce or significantly diminish existing employer-provided paid leave altogether.

“Creating a new federal paid leave program also raises questions about implementation challenges and costs to taxpayers. States’ experience standing up paid leave programs illustrate some of the challenges a new federal program could face.

“Several states that have enacted paid leave programs have had difficulty setting up even the most basic components of the program, leading to implementation delays.

“For example, applicants in multiple states have experienced delays with getting their claims approved, with processing times in one state expected to increase from about five weeks to four months by 2025 absent additional staffing.

“One state has had to repeatedly increase the revenue going to the program to avoid a funding deficit. And in another state, analysts have raised concerns that revenues may be too low to pay future benefits.

“Even though there are many challenges on this topic, the bipartisan work that continues from members on and off this Committee shows the importance of the issue.

“I appreciate the witnesses being here today, and I look forward to your testimony.”