

**Statement of United States Senator Patty Murray**  
**Ranking Member, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions**  
**for the**  
**United States Senate Committee on Finance**  
**Bipartisan Working Group on Paid Family Leave**  
**Round Table**  
**Paid Leave Proposals in the COVID Era**  
**June 18, 2020**

As we begin to slowly reopen the country, public health experts continue to stress the importance of people staying home from work if they are sick. This advice is paramount to keeping communities safe from the spread of the coronavirus and preventing new outbreaks. But for too many workers who don't have paid sick leave, following this advice presents an impossible decision. For 32 million workers across the country who have no permanent paid sick days, getting sick still means having to choose between staying home from work and losing a paycheck—and potentially even a job—or protecting themselves and their coworkers. That's no choice at all. Many of these workers are on the frontlines of this pandemic, keeping the country running and providing essential services to the rest of us, and they deserve better. And we absolutely cannot lose sight of the fact that Black workers and other workers of color are overrepresented in this group—and ensure that crucial rights like paid leave are part of our continuing fight for racial economic justice.

The harm to our public health and to workers across the country as a result of the lack of federal paid sick days and paid family and medical leave in our country is enormous—especially given what we're up against with the coronavirus crisis. That's why it is so crucial that we pass the PAID Leave Act, a comprehensive emergency paid sick days and paid family and medical leave bill I'm proud to have introduced along with Congresswoman DeLauro and Senator Gillibrand. The current pandemic has shown us that a federal paid leave policy is far overdue. Had federal paid sick days legislation, such as the Healthy Families Act, been in place when the coronavirus pandemic broke out, we could have significantly reduced the spread of the virus. The pandemic has taught this country many lessons, but one is all too clear: the United States must join nearly every other industrialized country in establishing a national paid sick days and paid family and medical leave policy.