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Supporting Earned Sick Leave in Illinois

Submitted by Delegate Steven M. Powell, UFCW Local 881

WHEREAS, the US is the only industrialized nation without some form of national maternity leave and three quarters of OECD countries also guarantee paid leave for the father or co-parent. Many wealthy nations also have additional mechanisms to ensure workers receive paid time off to care for their own long term illness or to care for severely ill family members; and

WHEREAS, only 14 percent of US private sector workers have access to paid family leave through their employers, meaning that millions of workers are without any ability to stay home with a new child or severely sick family member without losing out their job and livelihood; and

WHEREAS, the workforce has changed with 62 percent of women with children under the age of 3 in the paid workforce and more men reporting participating in caregiving compared to past generations; and

WHEREAS, public support for paid family leave is at an all-time high according to multiple public polls including a Washington Post poll that found more than four-fifths of voters, including 94 percent of Democrats, 80 percent of Independents, and 65 percent of Republicans, agree that workplace rules to ensure paid time off to care for family members “is good for our nation and economy”; and

WHEREAS, paid family leave programs have led to a number of positive outcomes, including higher rates of involvement by fathers and mothers returning to the workforce in greater numbers and with higher wages which are even acknowledged by a majority of employers when surveyed in California and New Jersey who reported that their state’s paid family leave laws resulted in “positive effects” or “no noticeable effect” in their company’s ability to operate a profitable business; and

WHEREAS, paid leave is good for families and children and gives babies their very best start in life and reduces infant mortality and produces better long-term healthy outcomes, especially for children with chronic health conditions; and

WHEREAS, replacement income provided by paid family leave goes right back into the local economy and boosts businesses, as workers are able to continue to make purchases to cover their basic needs and contributes to housing and employment stability; and

WHEREAS, the federal government extended paid family leave to all federal employees for the first time starting in October 2020, thanks to the National Defense Authorization Act of 2020, which will provide up to 12 weeks of paid leave to mothers and fathers of newborns, newly adopted children, or foster children; and

WHEREAS, the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted millions of American workers who have fallen ill and passed away due to infection, plunged our economy into a recession, caused severe economic displacement of tens of millions, and put millions of workers on the frontlines of a global pandemic which has further highlighted the disparity of the United States of America being among one of the only industrialized nations that does not have a national paid family leave law; and

WHEREAS, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act granted an additional 10 weeks of paid expanded family and medical leave at two-thirds the employee’s regular rate of pay where an employee, who has been employed for at least 30 calendar days, is unable to work due to a bona fide need for leave to care for a child whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, this historic COVID-19 related expansion will expire on December 31st, 2020 which shows the need for permanent policies at state and local levels stop families from having to make impossible choices between caring for their families and earning a paycheck; and

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WHEREAS, national efforts in Congress continue to push for enactment of The Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act introduced by Senator Kristen Gillibrand and Rep. Rosa DeLauro, and co-sponsored by many federal officeholders from Illinois, which would provide up to 12 weeks of paid leave each year to qualifying workers for the birth or adoption of a new child, and for self-care or the care of a seriously ill family member, and would make workers eligible to collect benefits equal to 66 percent of their typical monthly wages with a capped monthly maximum amount; and

WHEREAS, in-lieu of a national family leave policy, states including California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Washington, and the District of Columbia have enacted paid family and medical leave recognizing that we all want healthy children, time with our family, strong communities, and a thriving economy; and

WHEREAS, there are efforts from labor unions, advocates, and legislative allies including Senator Villivalam and Representative Slaughter in Illinois to enact Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act (SB 1723), which will apply to all employers and allow for 12 weeks of partially-paid leave for an employee's serious illness, serious illness of a family member, new parent leave for birth or adoption, family member on active duty, and a domestic violence or sexual assault situation; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Illinois labor movement acknowledges that we labor for our family's livelihood and well-being and supporting healthy families is essential to a thriving union movement, economy, and society, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Illinois AFL-CIO commends the Paid Family Leave coalition, of which many labor unions are involved in, for their efforts in passing family leave legislation in Illinois, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Illinois AFL-CIO calls on the members of the Illinois General Assembly and the Governor to pass and sign a bill in the 2020 veto session or the 2021 legislative session to enact paid family leave for the millions of workers in the state that do not currently have the ability to stay home and care for a sick loved one or a new child; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that the Illinois AFL-CIO will transmit a copy of this resolution to the Central Labor Councils and its affiliates throughout the State of Illinois to support and encourage efforts to pass paid family and medical leave legislation.