

**WASHINGTON, DC - Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD) released the following statement this evening after the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act (H.R. 626), which would provide four weeks of paid leave to Federal employees for the birth or adoption of a child.**

"I am proud to support this bill to strengthen America's families. Strong families are the cornerstone of our Nation's future. They enhance children's well-being, improve their self-esteem, and significantly increase the odds that they will succeed in school and grow up to be good parents themselves. And study after study shows that a strong predictor of child well-being is the degree to which a parent and child bond in the first months after birth. The more constant and nurturing that bond is in the early months of life, the better off that child will be in the years to come.

"One of the most important things Congress did to help parents and children strengthen that bond was to pass the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) in 1993. It was the first bill signed by President Clinton. Under its protection, eligible workers receive 12 weeks of leave every year, so that they can care for newborn or adopted baby, or help a loved one recover from illness, or get better themselves-without the worry that, when they return, their job will be gone.

"The FMLA has been an outstanding success. But it has not been enough. Because the FMLA does not entitle anyone to receive an income while on leave, far too many people with the right to leave are unable to take it. They rush back to the workplace after giving birth, or send their sick children to school, or leave their ailing parents at home to somehow make it through the day-because there is no other option. In fact, when it comes to the failure to guarantee paid maternity leave, America stands virtually alone in the world.

"It's time to realize that a right to paid leave, especially for new parents, is more than a family matter-it is a public good that means healthier families, more productive children, and, in the end, a stronger economy for all of us.

"Today, we have a valuable chance to establish that right for some of our most dedicated public servants: Federal employees. Currently, the Federal government does not provide them with paid parental leave. This bill would change that-providing four weeks of paid leave to Federal employees for the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child.

"As the nation's largest employer, the Federal government has the opportunity to set a valuable and lasting example for a responsible leave policy. It is time for America to catch up with the rest of the world, and this bill is a vital step in that direction."

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