

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 5, 2024

The Honorable Kiran Ahuja  
Director  
U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
1900 E Street, NW 1800 F St NW  
Washington, D.C. 20415

Dear Director Ahuja,

A new paid parental leave benefit was authorized for most federal civilian employees through the Federal Employee Paid Leave Act of 2019 (FEPLA)<sup>[1]</sup>. The Joint Explanatory Statement<sup>[2]</sup> accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 directed the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to review the status of federal paid parental leave, including the new benefit. The GAO's report<sup>[3]</sup> and its findings and recommendations became public in January 2024.

The report revealed some encouraging news about parental leave benefits for federal civilian employees. In the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the three agencies selected for review, the GAO found “no significant obstacles to employees using paid parental leave” and that these agencies were using several different channels to communicate with their employees about the benefit. However, the report also detailed that perhaps the most important communication channels, the public-facing webpages of the selected agencies, “did not reflect current paid parental leave policies.”

The report also found that OPM's Leave Administration webpage is out of date as well. Even worse, the page includes a handbook on paid leave that is nearly a decade out of date and no fact sheets on FEPLA. We are deeply concerned that when asked about this, OPM officials said they had not completed updating the Handbook on Leave and Workplace Flexibilities for Childbirth, Adoption, and Foster Care because “they had competing priorities and limited staff available.” In our view, this explanation is inadequate to justify this long delay, and it is essential that OPM prioritize updating its handbook.

We are grateful that according to the data, 55% of federal employees aged 40 and younger cited access to paid parental leave as a reason to remain in the federal government. We also recognize that the agencies selected for this report have begun updating their websites to reflect the correct information on these benefits. Yet, with greater awareness and information provided by OPM, we are confident that this number would be higher.

We implore OPM to take action immediately and follow the recommendations of the GAO report. Although OPM plans to have the guidance updated “by the end of 2024,” we stress that as FEPLA has now passed its fourth anniversary of enactment, this deadline should be seen as a floor and not a ceiling. In addition to your response to this letter, we request that OPM provide a status update to us by July 31, 2024, on actions taken on this matter. OPM must prioritize updating its 2015 handbook and associated fact sheets on its “Leave Administration” webpage to include current and accurate paid parental leave information as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



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Chrissy Houlahan  
Member of Congress



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Stephanie Bice  
Member of Congress



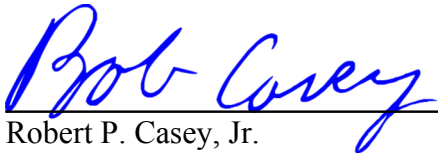
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Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



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Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
United States Senator



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Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



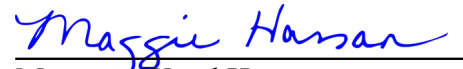
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Cynthia M. Lummis  
United States Senator



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Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator



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Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator



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Todd Young  
United States Senator

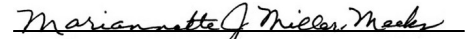


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Thom Tillis  
United States Senator

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Julia Letlow, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Mariannette Miller-Meeks", written in a cursive style above a horizontal line.

Mariannette Miller-Meeks, M.D.  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Colin Z. Allred", written in a cursive style above a horizontal line.

Colin Z. Allred  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Haley Stevens", written in a cursive style above a horizontal line.

Haley M. Stevens  
Member of Congress