

Vermont Commission on Women

Paid Family and Medical Leave Business Survey Report

Center for Rural Studies, University of Vermont- November 2016

Executive Summary: An online survey for Vermont business leaders was administered between September-November 2016 to a) gauge awareness and support for a number of different Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) arrangements, and b) understand current short-term and long-term leave policies offered by Vermont businesses. A total of 427 business leaders' responses were included in the data analysis, with representation from across the state in all sectors, a combination of both for-profit and nonprofit businesses, and various business sizes. Responses were somewhat split in terms of general support for a Paid Family and Medical Leave policy in Vermont, with 46.9% of businesses supportive of a statewide PFML policy for Vermont, and 40.4% not supportive of a statewide PFML policy for Vermont. When broken down into different reasons for an employee to take PFML, the greatest support was for paid leave to care for a new baby (42% of respondents were 'very supportive', while 22.5% were 'very unsupportive') and paid leave for pregnancy-related complications (42% of respondents were 'very supportive', while 18.8% were 'very unsupportive'). 40.5% were 'very supportive' of paid leave to care for one's own chronic or serious health condition (18.4% were 'very unsupportive'), and 30% were 'very supportive' of paid leave to care for a seriously ill family member (21.5% were 'very unsupportive'). In terms of current policies and practices, a greater percentage of businesses currently offer some form of paid short-term leave than those that offer paid long-term leave.

Business survey outreach: A survey of 30 questions was developed and programmed into Lime Survey by The Center for Rural Studies

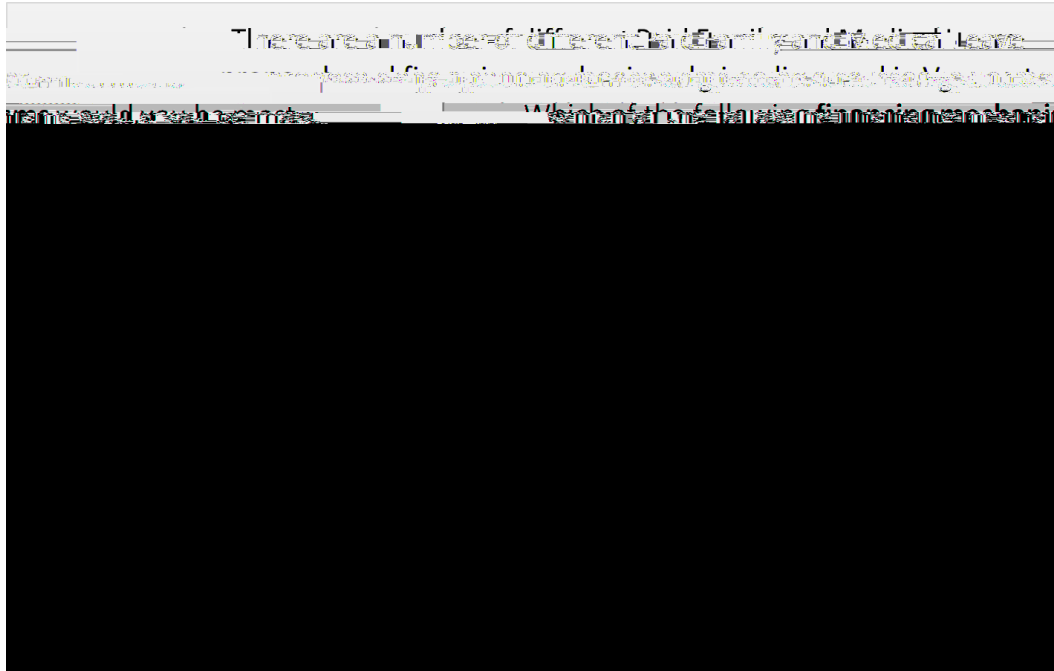
Retail and Grocers Association (1,000 members), Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility (VBSR), Main St. Alliance, Change the Story Business Peer Exchange, Let's Grow Kids business outreach team, Women's Business Owners Network, and Vermont Early Childhood Alliance. The survey description and link was mailed to these and other business umbrella organizations on 9/23, and a reminder email was sent on 10/7. We also called umbrella organizations and Chambers of Commerce to follow up and request that they share the survey.

Business sample

The following are key results regarding level of support for various types and arrangements of Paid Family and Medical Leave.

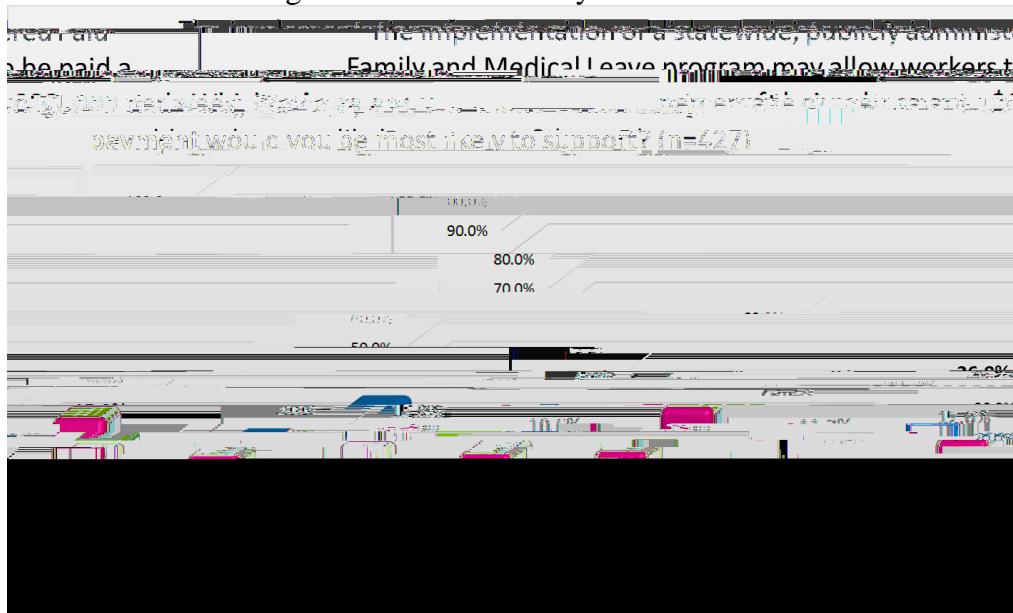
The financing mechanism with the greatest level of support was a combination of employer- and employee-funded program (32% favored) (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Preferred Financing Mechanism



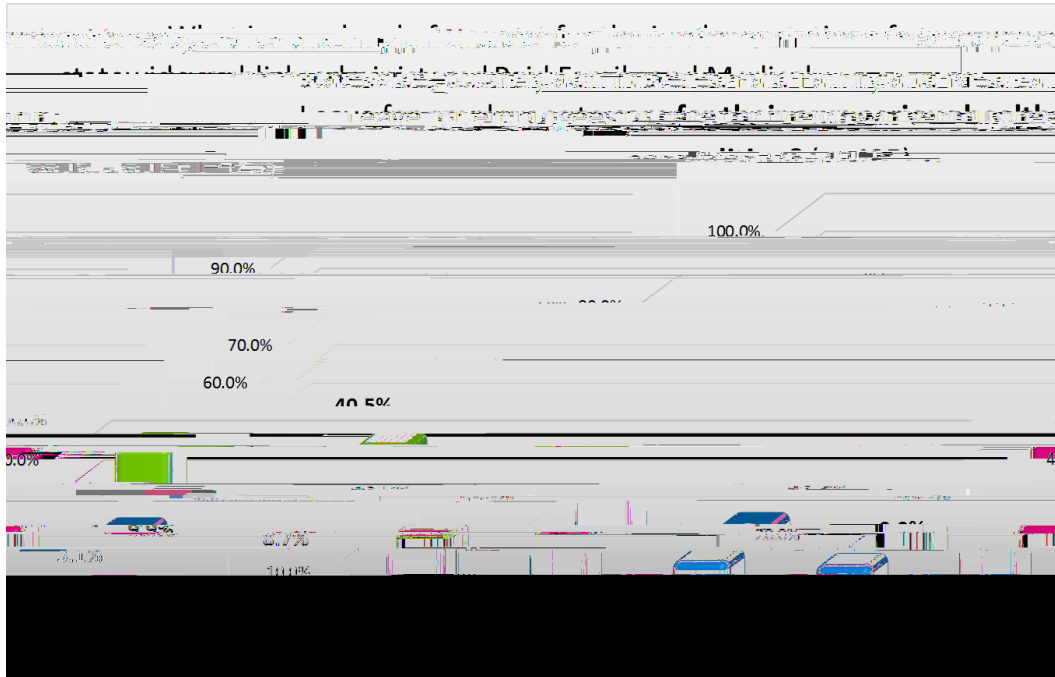
The salary arrangement with the greatest level of support was for employees to be paid 60% of their salary up to \$1,000 per week (27% favored) (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Preferred Salary Level



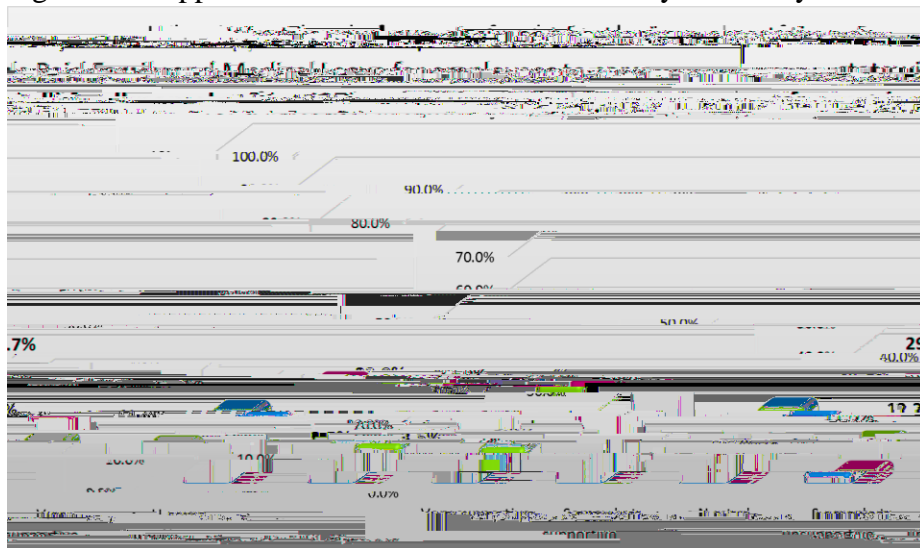
40.5% were 'very supportive' of paid leave to care for one's own chronic or serious health condition (18.4% were 'very unsupportive') (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Support for Leave for Employee's Own Chronic or Serious Health Condition



30% were 'very supportive' of paid leave to care for a seriously ill family member (21.5% were 'very unsupportive') (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Support for Leave to Care for a Seriously Ill Family Member



For over 90% of the businesses who offer paid long-term, fewer than a quarter of eligible employees utilized these benefits in the past year (Figure 17).

Figure 17. Long-term benefits utilized in the past year

29% of businesses observed improved employee retention and attraction as a result of offering paid long-term leave, and about half observed no change in or employee retention and attraction (Figure 18).

39% of businesses observed improved employee morale as a result of offering paid long-term leave, and

Conclusion and Recommendations

Vermont business leaders who responded to the survey were split in their level of support for a Paid Family and Medical Leave policy in Vermont. As a next step, we recommend an active outreach and education campaign to inform business owners, employees, and the general public about the background and justification for a PFML policy, and the specific details of such a policy for Vermont. For the business community, based on survey comments, framing should focus on the cost of such a policy, as well as an explanation of how small businesses will be supported.