

Colleagues donate holiday to new mothers due to lack of maternity pay in US ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The state of parental leave in the US is a "disgrace that has got to change", a former US presidential hopeful has said.

Bernie Sanders has slammed the US for not mandating paid maternity leave, after reports surfaced of colleagues donating their annual leave to help new mothers out.

Currently, new mothers can take 12 weeks of unpaid leave after giving birth or adopting a child - something that is not always viable depending on financial circumstances.

Some companies do offer paid maternity leave, but this is a perk of only 35% of jobs.

In the UK, Statutory Maternity Pay is paid for up to 39 weeks, including six weeks on 90% of a woman's salary, and a further 33 weeks at either 90% of their salary or £145.18 per week, whichever is lower.

Senator Sanders - who lost his bid to become the Democratic presidential candidate for the 2016 election - called for change after Good Morning America (GMA) highlighted how some colleagues had started donating their paid annual leave to those about to give birth, allowing them to spend more time with their newborns.

But like parental leave, there is no legal requirement in the US for employers to offer paid leave.

The average number of paid annual leave days offered by private employers in the US is 10 days after one year of service, 14 days after five years, rising to 20 days after 20 years.

In comparison in the UK, the legal minimum is 28 days of paid leave per year.

GMA spoke to two mothers, one of who, Angela Hughes, whose baby was born two months early by caesarean, but Ms Hughes did not qualify for any paid leave.

As a result, her colleagues donated a total of eight weeks, allowing her to take off four weeks while recovering from her operation, and a further four weeks when her daughter was discharged from a neonatal unit.

Not only did hundreds of people on social media attack GMA for describing the donating of leave to those in need as "trend" and for

portraying it as a feel-good story, but many called for paid maternity and paternity leave to be introduced as a "human right".

[twitter responses to Bernie Sanders and Good Morning America's tweets on maternity and paternity leave in the US]

[...]

How does maternity leave in the US compare to elsewhere in the world?

In the US women can take 12 weeks of unpaid leave, a worse situation than mothers in Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chad, where they are entitled to 14 paid weeks in each country.

Meanwhile in the UK, Statutory Maternity Pay is paid for up to 39 weeks, including six weeks on 90% of a woman's salary, and a further 33 weeks at either 90% of their salary or £145.18 per week, whichever is lower.

In the UK fathers can take two weeks of paternity leave, at either 90% of their weekly earnings, or £145.18 per week, whichever is lower.

Women legally have to take off two weeks from work following the birth of their child, but in some workplaces, the remainder of the 37 weeks can be split between parents.

A further 13 weeks maternity leave, or shared parental leave, can be taken, but this is unpaid.

Scandinavian countries consistently score highly when it comes to parental leave.

In Finland, mothers are paid for 21 weeks, fathers are paid for 11, and an additional period of 26 weeks can be split between the pair.

In Denmark, parents get a combined 52 weeks of parental leave - 18 weeks for the mother, two for the father, and 32 which can be split between the pair.

Related link:

Region: United States ^[3]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/18/07/colleagues-donate-holiday-new-mothers-due-lack-maternity-pay-us>

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<https://www.itv.com/news/2018-07-20/a-disgrace-that-has-got-to-change-bernie-sanders-slams-lack-of-maternity-pay-in-us/> ^[3]

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