

Extended Abstract

The changes in paid maternity leave policies in the public and private sectors in the United States: Expectations, reality and impact. Why it may not be enough?

Valerie Lynn

Author of The Mommy Plan, USA

Maternity leave in the United States is regulated by US labor law. The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) requires 12 weeks of unpaid leave annually for mothers of newborn or newly adopted children if they work for a company with 50 or more employees. Additionally, several states have adopted laws extending the requirements of FMLA to smaller companies. For the majority of US workers at companies with fewer than 50 employees, there is no legal right to paid or unpaid leave to care for a new child or recover from childbirth. Studies show the current laws disproportionately impact minorities and low-income women, who are less likely to take unpaid leave. Over the past two years there has been a significant focus on maternity leave policies in the United States trail-blazed by billionaire Mark Zuckerberg, Co-Founder of Facebook whose company was one of the first companies to offer extended paid maternity and paternity leave, which now stands at up to four months. This is due to Zuckerberg's wife, Pricilla Chan, being of Chinese descent that chose to enjoy a more traditional recovery period after giving birth spending time at home. Several companies in the private sectors, states, federal and as well as militaries have followed suit offering for 6 to 52 weeks of paid parental leave. This is also a strategic move in direct relation to stiff competition in the marketplace to attract and keep top talents. The question is, "Is paid maternity leave enough to ensure a productive, contributing employee returns?" In my opinion, it is not. This is only the first step. By providing employees the time and financial support required to welcome, take care of and incorporate a new member into a family is fundamental. However, this investment by the public and private sectors comes with high expectations. Will the ROI, return on investment, in paid maternity leave be met? If isn't, will there be a roll back in maternity leave benefits over the next 5-10 years?

Biography:

Valerie Lynn is a Traditional Feminine Healthcare Expert specializing in Postnatal Recovery. She is one of the leading new motherhood recovery experts in the United State. She is known as The Mommy Planner, has been a major force in introducing and modernizing traditional after birth recovery practices, more specifically the Malay traditions, and treatments to women globally. She has held positions such as Executive Director of the American Malaysian Chamber of Commerce and Principal of VLM Consultancy where she was provided strategic consultancy services for foreign companies entering the Malaysian and APEC markets.