

Examining the Feasibility of a Paid Family Leave Provision in Oklahoma Statute

Interim Study 25-028

Committee: Economic Development, Workforce and Tourism

About OPSR

OPSR was established by state statute in 2003 to coordinate services that help Oklahoma families access high-quality early care and education, family support, and health and mental health resources. These services are designed to ensure children receive the support they need during their most critical years of development, from birth through age five.

OPSR also serves as the State Advisory Council for Early Childhood Education and Care as required by the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act

MISSION: Lead Oklahoma in coordinating an early childhood system that strengthens families and ensures all children are ready for school

VISION: All Oklahoma children are safe, healthy, eager to learn and ready to succeed by the time they enter school.



Pathways to School Readiness

The Oklahoma School Readiness Pathway is a compilation of benchmarks, goals, outcomes, and indicators that illustrate how Health, Early Care & Learning, and Family Support influence a child's readiness for school.

THE PATHWAY

Children & Families Have Access to Health Services

Research shows that healthy children are better able to engage in experiences crucial to the learning process. Fundamental needs are:

- Babies are born on time and healthy.
- Children have access to health care.
- Children are physically and emotionally healthy.
- Children are on a positive development trajectory.

Children Engaged in High Quality Care & Learning

Children in high-quality early care and learning are more likely to succeed in school and throughout their lifetime. Objectives here are:

- Children have access to high-quality, developmentally appropriate programs with professionals.
- Children attend early learning programs and schools consistently.
- Children learn in safe environments with positive climates that support social-emotional development.

All Parents Have Access to Education & Support Services

Educated, skilled and supported family members and caregivers are better equipped to expose children to educational opportunities. This means:

- Children have safe, stable and nurturing relationships with caregivers.
- Families have the knowledge, skills and social support for their children's optimal development.
- Children live in economically secure families.
- Communities are safe, toxic-free and economically viable in support of children and their families.

Paid Family Medical Leave

Paid Family and Medical Leave is a policy that provides workers with job-protected time off from work, with partial wage replacement, to address specific family or medical needs (as determined by the state).

- Caring for a **new child** (through birth, adoption, or foster placement).
- Caring for a **seriously ill family member**.
- Addressing one's **own serious health condition**.
- Conditions arising from **domestic violence**, sexual assault, or stalking.
- Handling certain needs related to a **family member's military deployment** or service.

Paid Family Medical Leave Supports:

FAMILIES

- Supports Child Health & Development
- Improves Parental Health
- Reduces Financial Strain
- Promotes Stronger Caregiving Bonds

ECONOMY & WORKFORCE

- Improves Employee Retention and Reduces Turnover
- Boosts Productivity and Engagement
- Supports Workforce Participation
- Levels the Playing Field for Employers



Paid Family Medical Leave

What Precipitated this Interim Study?

2023 – Passage of Senate Bill 16X

- Provides six weeks of paid maternity leave for Oklahoma’s full-time state employees following the birth or adoption of a child.
 - Okla. Admin. Code § 260:25-15-59 - Paid Maternity Leave: “...an employee must be currently employed by the state working in a full-time status of forty (40) hours per week. Males and females are eligible to receive paid leave following the birth or adoption of the employee's child.”

2025 – Passage of House Bill 1601

- Expands existing paid maternity leave to Pre-K – 12 teachers.
 - 70 Okl.St.Ann. § 6-104.8 – “Persons employed full-time as teachers for at least a year... shall be entitled to six (6) weeks of paid maternity leave following the birth of the employee's child.”

2025 – Consideration of Senate Bill 277

- Would have created the Oklahoma State Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act.
 - Not heard by Senate Appropriations Committee

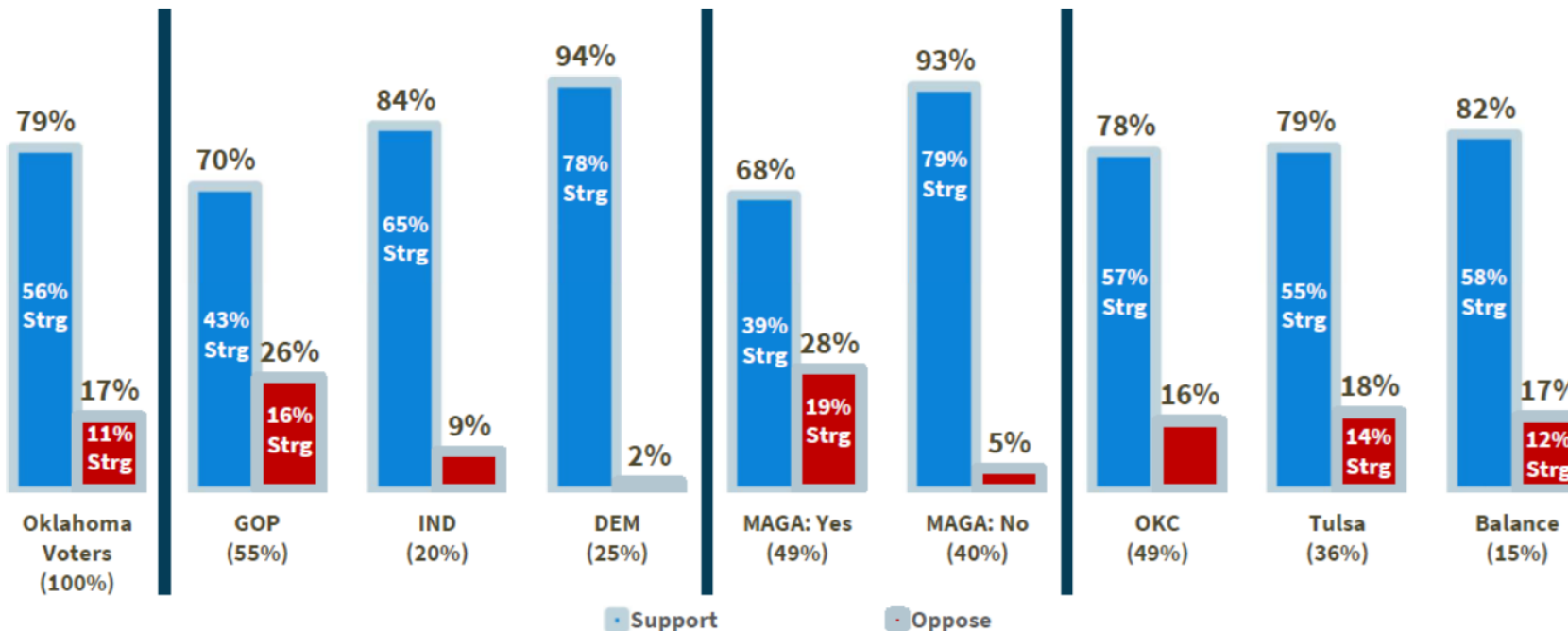
2025 – Consideration of Senate Bill 254

- Requires the Department of Labor, to contract for the services of a qualified third-party actuary to perform an actuarial study for a paid family and medical leave insurance program in Oklahoma.
 - Not heard on the Senate Floor
 - **OPSR then commissioned the study on behalf of the state of Oklahoma which will be presented today.**

Pathways to School Readiness

What Precipitated this Interim Study?

Nearly 80% of Oklahoma voters support creating a state-funded paid leave program for working parents.



Paid Family Medical Leave



Parental Voice on Paid Family Medical Leave

Colleen Howe

- Parent Partnership Board at the Oklahoma Commission on Children & Youth



Research on Paid Family Medical Leave

Dr. Cynthia Osborne

- Professor of Early Childhood Education and Policy, Department of Leadership, Policy, and Organizations at Vanderbilt University
- Executive Director, Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center



Actuarial Study on Paid Family Medical Leave for Oklahoma

Paul Correia

- CERA, FSA, MAAA
- Principal and Consulting Actuary at The Milliman Group

THANK YOU



OKLAHOMA
PARTNERSHIP
FOR SCHOOL
READINESS

Paid Family Medical Leave

PFML vs. FMLA

Family Medical Leave Act (Federal Law, 1993):

- Provides up to 12 weeks of **unpaid**, job-protected leave per year.
- Covers certain family and medical reasons: birth/adoption of a child, caring for a seriously ill family member, or recovering from one's own serious health condition.
- Only applies to employers with 50 or more employees within a 75-mile radius.
- Employees must have worked for their employer for at least 12 months and at least 1,250 hours in the past year.

Paid Family Medical Leave:

- **Provides paid leave** with wage replacement (usually partial wages), typically funded through payroll taxes.
- Many state programs offer similar coverage reasons as FMLA, but often include broader definitions of family and sometimes longer durations (up to 12–16 weeks or more).
- Eligibility requirements vary by state, but often apply to more workers than FMLA does.
- In many states, PFML wage replacement is paired with FMLA job protection if the employee qualifies for both. Workers not covered by FMLA may still get paid leave but not guaranteed job restoration.