

## **Building the Paid Family and Medical Leave New Yorkers Need: Improving New York's Paid Family Leave and Temporary Disability Benefits Program**

Key updates to New York's paid family leave and temporary disability benefits program are urgently needed to ensure that pregnant workers can take time off work to keep themselves and their pregnancies healthy, workers with disabilities can stay attached to the workforce while addressing their health needs, and that all workers are truly able to care for themselves and their families without sacrificing their economic security. New York can do this by:

### **Raising the Benefit Levels for Workers' Own Health Needs and Paid Family Leave**

- New York must adopt a progressive wage replacement rate (the percentage of their own income workers receive in weekly benefits) for paid family leave and temporary disability insurance benefits, such that workers receive 90% of their average weekly wages up to 50% of the statewide average weekly wage and 67% of their average weekly wages above that, better aligning New York's paid family leave benefits rate with that of other states, and increasing access to paid family leave for low-income workers.
- New York must also raise the benefit cap (the maximum amount of money a worker may receive per week) for one's own serious health needs from \$170—where it has been stuck since 1989—to match paid family leave's cap at 67% of statewide average weekly wages.

### **Protecting Workers' Jobs During Medical Leave**

- New York must ensure that New Yorkers have robust employment protections, including the right to return to their job following leave and the right to continuation of their health insurance while they're on leave when they take leave for their own serious health needs, mirroring the protections already available for those who take paid family leave.

### **Meeting the Needs of Today's Workforce by Creating Portable Paid Family Leave Benefits**

- New York must ensure that paid family leave benefits are accessible to employees as they move from job to job or face periods of unemployment, and that workers do not lose access to benefits when they leave a particular job—New York can do this by using the portable eligibility criteria already used for benefits for one's own serious health needs.
- New York must also ensure that the self-employed have a meaningful ability to opt into paid family leave benefits, as they do for benefits for their own serious health conditions.

### **Adopting an Inclusive Family Definition**

- New York must ensure that all New Yorkers can take leave to care for all of their closest loved ones by adopting an inclusive family definition for paid family leave that includes chosen family as well as extended blood relatives.