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**COMMENTS BY:** REPRESENTATIVE ERIK R. FLEMING (MS)



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## POLICY BRIEFING SERIES

## WORK-FAMILY INFORMATION FOR STATE LEGISLATORS

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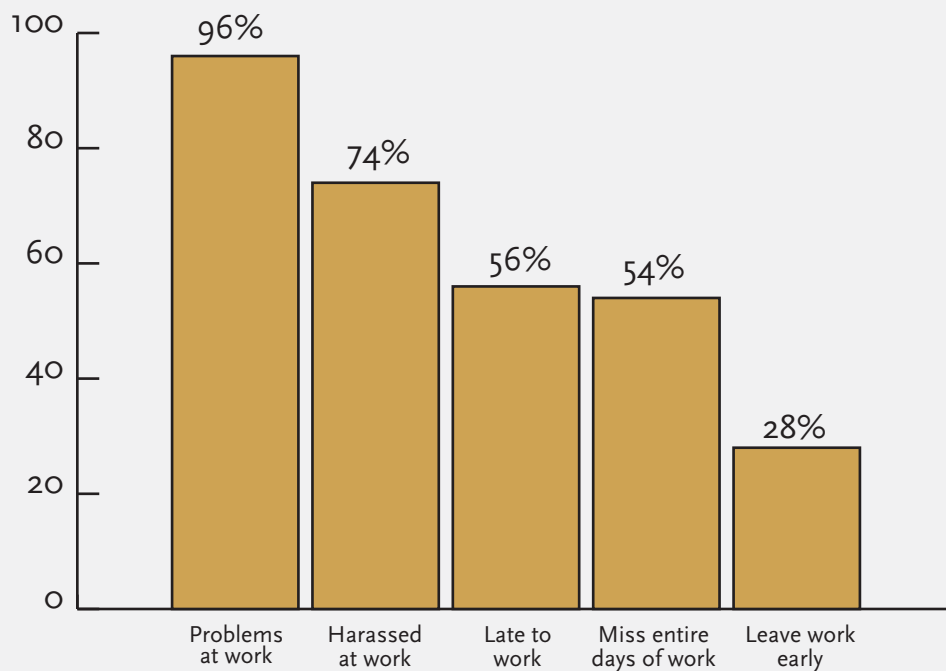
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## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE WORKPLACE: SUPPORTING WORKERS EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

*One in five US workers are victims of domestic violence, with 31% of those workers reporting that their employers provided no programs, support or help.<sup>1</sup>*

Domestic violence, also referred to as intimate partner violence, battering, or relationship abuse, has been defined as, “a pattern of behavior used to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation [often including the threat or use of physical, sexual, psychological and/or economic abuse].”<sup>2</sup>

### Negative Outcomes for Workers Experiencing Domestic Violence<sup>3</sup>



Domestic violence is a public health issue that has negative impacts on the personal and professional lives of victims, as well as their employers and colleagues. State policy can help to mitigate the harmful consequences of domestic violence at the workplace.

### HOW DOES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IMPACT WORKERS?

Disruptions at work are common for victims of domestic violence:

- 96% report experiencing problems at work,
- 74% are harassed at work by their abuser,
- 56% are late to work,
- 54% miss entire days of work, and
- 28% leave work early.<sup>3</sup>

**Chart Source:** Gagnon, M. (1995). Employer liability for workplace violence. *Crime Victims' Litigation Quarterly*, 2(4), 10-12. Arlington, VA: National Center for Victims of Crime.

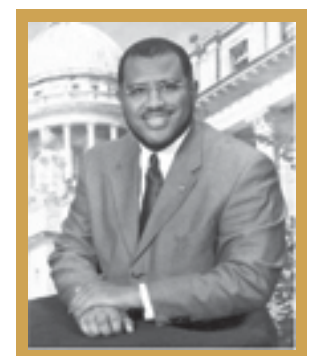
### WHY IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE A POLICY MATTER?

State laws can either motivate or discourage employers from offering support to workers experiencing domestic violence.

- Employers will be more likely to adopt policies that support victims of domestic violence if they are rewarded with incentives and recognition.
- State laws can encourage businesses to establish policies that guarantee victimized workers leave to address issues that result from domestic violence, compensation when unemployment arises, and protections from discrimination.
- State legislators can support bills that increase public awareness of domestic violence as a workplace issue.

*“I BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE WHO ARE ABUSED AND STALKED SUFFER TREMENDOUSLY, NOT ONLY PHYSICALLY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY, BUT ECONOMICALLY AS WELL. MANY HAVE LOST THEIR JOBS BECAUSE THE SHAME, OR THE INJURIES THEY HAVE RECEIVED, PROHIBIT THEM FROM WORKING. MANY HAVE ALSO LOST THEIR JOBS BECAUSE OF THE CONFRONTATIONS CAUSED BY ABUSERS AND STALKERS SHOWING UP AT THE JOB. THEREFORE, I THINK IT IS ONLY FAIR AND JUST TO ALLOW THESE VICTIMS TO HAVE THE ECONOMIC MEANS TO ESCAPE THIS VICIOUS ENVIRONMENT. I KNOW THAT MANY STAY IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS FOR FINANCIAL REASONS. THIS LEGISLATION WOULD GIVE THEM THE FREEDOM TO GET OUT, MAINTAIN THEIR DIGNITY, AND START A NEW LIFE WITH A MINIMAL FINANCIAL BURDEN.”*

REPRESENTATIVE ERIK R. FLEMING (MS) ON HB 271 AND THE IMPORTANCE  
OF SUPPORTING WORKERS EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



## HOW DOES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AFFECT WORKING FAMILIES?

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Research documents the detrimental impacts that domestic violence has on working families.

- Abusive partners can prevent victims from becoming financially self-sufficient by sabotaging their efforts to gain and maintain employment.<sup>4</sup> However, working helps many women escape abusive relationships.<sup>5</sup>
- Intimate partner violence against women is associated with unemployment.<sup>6</sup> In a 1997 study, approximately 59.4% percent of women who experienced severe aggression in the past 12 months reported that they were currently unemployed, with 67.2% reporting having ever been unemployed.<sup>7</sup>

Over half of female victims of intimate violence live in households with children under age 12.<sup>8</sup> Children with working parents who experience domestic violence suffer when their parent loses a job or misses work due to abuse.

## BUSINESSES INCUR COSTS WHEN THEY DO NOT PROVIDE SUPPORTS FOR VICTIMIZED WORKERS.

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The effects of domestic violence extend beyond the victim experiencing the abuse. Businesses that do not support victimized workers are paying a high price.

- “The annual cost of lost productivity due to domestic violence is estimated at \$727.8 million, with over 7.9 million paid workdays lost each year.”<sup>9</sup> Costs can be alleviated if businesses support workers experiencing domestic violence. Sixty-six percent of senior executives and 75% of human resource directors indicate that the negative consequences [such as lost productivity] would be reduced if domestic violence issues were addressed within the company.<sup>10</sup>
- Wrongful death actions against employers who failed to address an employee’s risk of domestic violence on the job have cost up to \$850,000.<sup>11</sup>

## CONSTITUENTS WANT LEGISLATION TO ASSIST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS.

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In a 2005 national survey, respondents reported that employers should provide domestic violence victims with access to the following<sup>1</sup>:

- Time off to go to court or the police station (71%)
- Unpaid leave (66%)
- Domestic violence information and referral (65%)
- Security/safety planning (54%)
- Paid leave (50%)

## MOST STATES HAVE ALREADY PASSED LEGISLATION TO SUPPORT WORKERS EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

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- Twenty-nine states guarantee employee protections to victims of domestic violence (AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, DC, IL, IN, KS, ME, MA, MN, MO, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NY, NC, OK, OR, RI, SC, SD, TX, VT, WA, WI, WY)<sup>12</sup>
- Six states provide domestic violence victims with paid or unpaid leave to address issues that arise due to abuse (CA, CO, HI, IL, ME, NC)<sup>12</sup>
- Four states have enacted legislation that initiated government research on domestic violence and the workplace (NJ, NY, NC, OR)<sup>12</sup>

## STATES HAVE MADE WORKERS EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE A PRIORITY IN RECENT SESSIONS.

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Twenty-four states have introduced bills supporting workers experiencing domestic violence in the 2006-2007 legislative sessions, including:

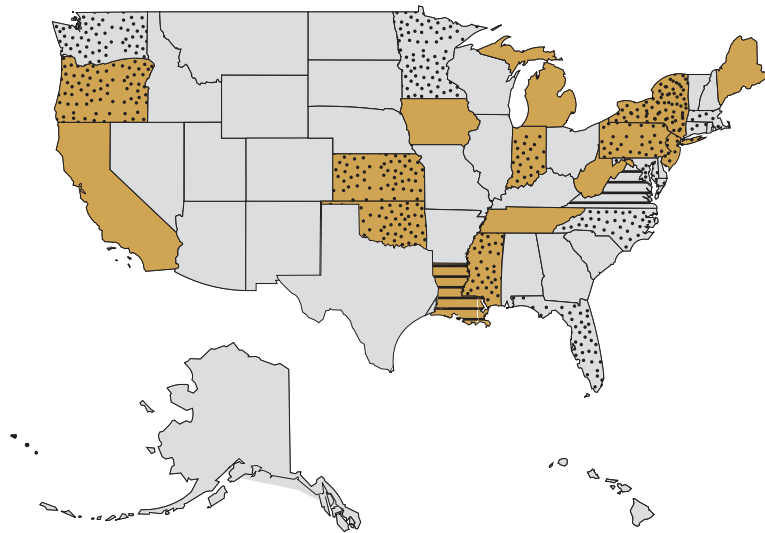
- Preventing employees who leave work as a result of domestic violence from being disqualified from receiving unemployment benefits (IA, KS, LA, MI, MS, NJ, OR, TN, WV)
- Prohibiting employers from discriminating against victims of domestic violence (CA, IN, ME, NY, OK, PA)
- Allowing employees to take paid sick leave to address legal, medical, and/or psychological issues that result from abuse (CT, FL, MA, MD, MN, OR)
- Promoting the establishment of domestic violence awareness and employee assistance policies (CA, NY, PA)
- Providing employees with paid or unpaid leave to obtain services or treatment relating to domestic violence (FL, IN, KS, MA, MS, NC, NJ, NY, OK, PA, WA)
- Directing committees and commissions to study the affects of domestic violence on the workplace (LA, VA)
- Extending leave options to family members of domestic violence victims (MA)

## STATES HAVE MADE WORKERS EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE A PRIORITY IN RECENT SESSIONS (CONT'D).

Employee protections (CA, IA, IN, KS, LA, ME, MI, MS, NJ, NY, OK, OR, PA, TN, WV)

Leave (CT, FL, IN, KS, MA, MD, MN, MS, NC, NJ, NY, OK, OR, PA, WA)

Government Research (LA, VA)



For more bills and statutes, visit [wfnetwork.bc.edu/bills.php](http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/bills.php)

## WHERE CAN I GET ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE WORKPLACE?

The following resources about domestic violence and the workplace might interest you.

- *Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence*, a national non-profit organization concerned with reducing the high costs and consequences of partner violence on the workplace, <http://www.caepv.org>
- *Family Violence Prevention Fund*, a national organization that works to assist those who are experiencing domestic violence and to prevent domestic violence at home and in the community, <http://www.endabuse.org/workplace/>
- *Partnership for Prevention*, a membership organization of businesses, non-profit organizations and government agencies that advocate for policies and practices that will promote the health of all Americans, <http://www.prevent.org/>

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## CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF THE SLOAN NETWORK (1997-2007)

The Sloan Work and Family Research Network can provide you with additional research-based information about working families.  
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