

CENTER FOR WORKLIFE LAW  
U.C. Hastings College of the Law  
&  
SLOAN WORK AND FAMILY RESEARCH NETWORK  
Boston College

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**December 8, 2008**

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***Two Centers Team Up to Release New Research on  
State Legislation to Protect Family Caregivers***

(San Francisco, CA & Boston, MA) — While both the President-Elect and the future First Lady have expressed their desire for federal public policy to help working families, new research released today shows that state legislators around the country have already made ground-breaking strides toward this end in their own states.

Today, the Center for WorkLife Law at the U.C. Hastings College of the Law and the Sloan Work and Family Research Network at Boston College released a new research brief for state policy makers, entitled *Addressing Family Responsibilities Discrimination*. The brief describes state policy efforts to address family responsibilities discrimination (FRD)—employment discrimination in which workers are fired, demoted, not promoted, denied employment benefits, or harassed because of their caregiving responsibilities for a child, partner, or elderly relative. The brief explores the growing problem of FRD, why FRD is a policy matter, and how FRD negatively impacts both employees and their employers.

The brief also details recently proposed state legislation on FRD—the first research of its kind to do so. Since 2007, policymakers in seven states (CA, FL, IA, MI, NJ, NY, PA) and New York City have introduced legislation to explicitly prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of familial or caregiver status or family responsibilities to care for children. In addition, lawmakers in one state (MT) have proposed prohibiting hostile work environment harassment based on family responsibilities.

While most states prohibit discrimination in *housing* based on familial status, to date only Alaska and the District of Columbia have laws that explicitly prohibit *employment* discrimination based on parental status or family responsibilities. Yet the Center for WorkLife Law has identified over 1500 lawsuits brought by employees for FRD under a variety of legal theories using existing state and federal law. Because FRD is not explicitly prohibited under most state laws, employers may be caught unaware.

“The number of FRD lawsuits has been growing steadily, and interest in FRD has been bubbling up all over,” said Stephanie Bornstein, co-author of the brief and Associate Director for the Center for WorkLife Law at U.C. Hastings College of the Law, often cited as the go-to resource for information on FRD. “This brief provides concrete information for state legislators who are concerned about the issue of family responsibilities discrimination.”

“This brief will deepen the understanding state legislators have about this modern day burgeoning issue which not only affects both male and female workers, but also their places of business,” added Julie Schwartz Weber, co-author of the brief and Policy Specialist with the Sloan Work and Family Research Network at Boston College. “With few families having a stay at home parent to tend to caregiving responsibilities, more workers are taking on these duties, and thus, understanding this issue is essential.”

The newly released policy brief, *Addressing Family Responsibilities Discrimination*, can be viewed at [http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/pdfs/policy\\_makers16.pdf](http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/pdfs/policy_makers16.pdf).

For more information on FRD, visit the **Center for WorkLife Law**, a research and advocacy center that works to identify and prevent family responsibilities discrimination, providing resources for employers, employees, attorneys, policymakers, and the press, at <http://www.worklifelaw.org>.

For more information on work-family legislative initiatives and trends, visit the **Sloan Work and Family Research Network** website—the premier online destination for information about work and family—including state policy resources, a bills and statutes database, policy briefs, statistics, and reports, at: <http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/policy.php>.

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