

I-PLAN Act of 2024: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

1: How many states have paid family and medical leave programs?

Thirteen states and DC have enacted state paid family and medical leave programs – and more states are expected to do so in the coming years:

- California (2002), New Jersey (2008), Rhode Island (2013), New York (2016), Washington (2017), District of Columbia (2017), Massachusetts (2018), Connecticut (2019), Oregon (2019), Colorado (2020), Delaware (2022), Maryland (2022), Minnesota (May 2023), and Maine (July 2023).

Several of those states are not yet paying benefits:

- Delaware, Maryland, and Minnesota (all Jan. 2026); and Maine (May 2026).

2: Why is paid leave important

Paid family and medical leave plays a vital role in the lives of workers, their families, and the U.S. economy. These benefits safeguard employees with physical, mental, emotional, and financial wellbeing during their time of need. Workers should not have to choose between caring for themselves or their families and working.

3: Are there currently federal connections to state paid leave programs – or across state programs?

There are no federal-state or interstate connections across state paid leave programs. The variation in when and how these programs were built and designed has led to a patchwork of policy complexities and administrative processes as well as a lack of benefit portability – all of which undermines worker access.

Other social insurance programs like unemployment insurance built these types of beneficial connections nearly a century ago that stand today. The I-PLAN Act of 2024 would build a much-needed foundation by bringing states with paid leave programs together in a way that works for states, employers, and employees.

4: What is the basic structure of the I-PLAN?

The I-PLAN Act of 2024 would bring state paid leave programs together to create an interstate agreement (i.e., “I-PLAN Agreement”) to drive improvements in the coordination and harmonization of these benefits and improve worker access. A “national intermediary” (i.e., non-governmental workforce organization) would manage and oversee the requirements of the I-PLAN.

The I-PLAN Agreement would accomplish three requirements:

- Policy standard: Create a single policy standard to facilitate easier compliance with and understanding of paid leave programs across states including definitions for common terms.
- Administrative standard: Create a single administrative standard to facilitate easier compliance with and understanding of paid leave programs across states including processes like the development of an equivalency standard to determine whether the maximum monetary value of an employer plan is greater than or equal to the maximum monetary value of a state program.
- Coordination of benefits across state paid leave programs: Create a single process for state programs to process claims for eligible individuals who have work history across multiple I-PLAN member states so that these individuals can receive benefits from one primary state program.

State paid leave programs would receive two types of annual grants to incentivize their participation, help pay for their administrative program costs, and help small businesses in their state afford employer payroll contributions or access other forms of assistance – Conforming Grants when they have a “State focal” and participate in the I-PLAN in good faith (i.e., come to the table) and Implementation Grants when they also enter into the I-PLAN Agreement (i.e., join the agreement and meet its requirement).

5: How does the I-PLAN improve worker access to paid leave in states *with* programs now?

Over half of those employed in the United States are in states with a paid leave program. While state paid leave programs share a common purpose – to provide workers with access to paid leave benefits – their lack of uniformity and connectivity has led to inequity, unpredictability, and confusion for employees, particularly with the increase in hybrid work and employees who work in multiple states.

The I-PLAN supports worker access to paid leave in states with programs now by:

- Increasing portability: Creating a standardized technology-based system for state programs to share claimant wage history data with one another to process interstate claims ensures that a worker with employment and wages in more than one state can combine those wages and qualify for paid leave benefits in a single state. That boosts the likelihood an employee is eligible for paid leave (i.e., by reaching any earnings and tenure requirements) and could also result in a higher weekly benefit amount (i.e., by having a more accurate/representative earnings history).
- Strengthening equitable access: The other two pillars of the I-PLAN Agreement (i.e., policy and administrative standards) provide a pathway for employers to thread the needle across state paid leave programs and offer a uniform, equitable set of benefits to all their employees regardless of work location. This means that employers could “design up” and find a way to structure one employer-provided paid leave plan that meets or exceeds all these state programs (and do so in a way that accounts for the overall monetary value of these benefits). That simplicity would help employees navigate these critical benefit programs. It would also free up employer resources for funding employee benefits or other productive investments. Indeed, a recent survey by Mercer

found that over 70% of employers reported that in the past 5 years they have had to increase resources used to ensure compliance with these mandates.

- Providing critical resources to state paid leave programs: The I-PLAN Act would also provide state paid leave programs with Conforming Grants and Implementation Grants which would enhance worker access to paid leave by:
 - Improving customer service, staffing and training, technology, program integrity, and program awareness.
 - Helping small businesses afford payroll contributions and provide other forms of assistance.

6: How does the I-PLAN improve worker access to paid leave in states *without* programs now?

In two ways – first, when employers provide paid leave to workers, they prefer to do so in the same way across their entire workforce regardless of geography. Meaning that enhancements to those benefits because of the I-PLAN helps employees not just in paid leave states, but all states.

And second, in the future once an interstate agreement is created and established then states without paid leave programs would have an ability to design and enact one that could “click in” and join the I-PLAN. This would allow these states to also share the I-PLAN’s benefits and resources.

7: Is it mandatory that states join the I-PLAN?

No, it is completely voluntary for states to join the I-PLAN. The purpose of the I-PLAN is to build a table, staffed by a national intermediary, to facilitate the creation of an interstate agreement (i.e., I-PLAN Agreement) that would create coordination and harmonization across state paid leave programs.

8: Why would a state want to join the I-PLAN?

There is an increasing recognition across states with paid leave programs about the importance of communicating and working together to improve the design and delivery of state paid leave benefits.

- Doing so would ease the administration of their programs, ensure more accurate and portable benefits to workers, and strengthen program integrity.
- A state’s ability to successfully administer their programs is highly dependent on how they function in tandem with one another, not in isolation.

The I-PLAN provides the structure and incentives to carry out this critical work – and it keeps states in the driver’s seat because they determine the specific terms of the interstate agreement.

9: Wouldn't harmonization across state paid leave programs take a long time?

The I-PLAN recognizes that there will be differences across states concerning which areas may be easier to harmonize than another – both politically and substantively. The interstate agreement (i.e., I-PLAN Agreement) would be a living document that would mature over a continuum. This means it would grow and build over time to encompass more of each of its requirements in the pursuit of harmonization.

10: How does a state know whether what it agrees to in an interstate agreement could be passed by the state when it may need to update its state law?

A bedrock of the I-PLAN is that convening states also ensures the national intermediary can identify the layers associated with this core question. Right now, there is no compilation of state paid leave laws, regulations, and guidance/directives (i.e., the respective “buckets” of how policy changes would fit across states) – let alone, across the different complexities and how that varies by state.

There are also no dedicated resources currently to staff such an effort, which is why the I-PLAN includes funding to 1) provide a national intermediary with administrative funding hire staff, convene states, and oversee the I-PLAN; and 2) provide states with paid leave programs with proper incentives to come to the table in good faith to create, adopt, and improve on interstate agreements – and ensure that glue holds together over time (i.e., annual Conforming and Implementation Grants).

11: What about other paid leave efforts, such as the national paid leave program included in the reconciliation effort a couple years back? How does the I-PLAN impact that?

The I-PLAN would complement and build a bridge to other paid leave efforts because there is a need to reconcile how the growing number of state paid leave programs differ from one another.

For example, in the proposed national paid leave program included in the reconciliation effort in 2021, companies wouldn't have been able to thread the needle across “legacy states” (i.e., states with existing programs) and offer an equitable set of benefits to workers regardless of work location, states wouldn't have been able to deliver portable benefits, and workers would have faced challenges in how they navigate and access these benefits.

12: What if a state paid family and medical leave program signs an I-PLAN Agreement but doesn't enact the requisite policy changes in their guidance, regulation, and/or law to meet those terms?

States that sign an I-PLAN Agreement are given ample time – 4 years – to make any requisite changes before their Implementation Grant funding would stop. The type and scope of how to adopt those changes will differ by state, but there is a shared recognition of how states need adequate time to be able to implement the I-PLAN Agreement once it's signed. These states could continue to receive a Conforming Grant so long as they continue to have a State focal who participates in the I-PLAN in good faith.

13: What if my state does not have a paid leave program now, but creates one after the I-PLAN Act is enacted into law – could they still join the I-PLAN and get these grants, etc.?

Yes, the I-PLAN was designed to allow new state paid leave programs to “click in.” Meaning that a state that creates a new program can join the I-PLAN and receive these grants under the same conditions and requirements of other states, including grant funding.

The national intermediary can also provide help and assistance to states such as those considering new programs. This ensures that new states can hit the ground running by providing access to information to help them design programs that fit with the development of the I-PLAN Agreement.

14: How much in grants would each state paid leave program receive per year under the I-PLAN?

The I-PLAN includes two sets of grants – Conforming Grants and Implementation Grants. Each is authorized for up to \$40 million per year for FY 2026-28 (with inflation adjustments for FY 2027 and FY 2028), meaning a total of up to \$80 million each fiscal year is authorized across the two grants.

See the **Table** for the respective grant amounts by state. There is a minimum (\$1.5 million) and maximum (\$8 million) state grant amount. The formula for the grants would be based on the eligible state’s relative share of employment in all eligible states.

Table: I-PLAN Grant Amounts

	\$40M total (\$8M max & \$1.5M min)	
	Conforming Grant (\$)	Implementation Grant (\$)
California	\$8,000,000	\$8,000,000
Colorado	\$2,252,750	\$2,252,750
Connecticut	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
District of Columbia	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Delaware	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Maine	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Maryland	\$2,103,129	\$2,103,129
Massachusetts	\$2,843,198	\$2,843,198
Minnesota	\$2,285,523	\$2,285,523
New Jersey	\$3,308,449	\$3,308,449
New York	\$7,435,684	\$7,435,684
Oregon	\$1,514,978	\$1,514,978
Rhode Island	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Washington	\$2,756,288	\$2,756,288
	\$40,000,000	\$40,000,000
Max		
Min		