In the ongoing debate over a federal paid family leave program, much of the discussion has focused on either the costs of such a program or the benefits to the parents. In new research, AAF’s Director of Human Welfare Policy Tara O’Neill Hayes and Margaret Barnhorst examine the broader benefits of such a policy, particularly for children. The evidence makes clear that paid family leave could have substantial benefits for children, they find.

Their central points:

• Besides the economic benefits for parents, there are myriad health benefits for children whose parents receive paid family leave, primarily stemming from the increased regularity of well-baby check-ups, greater rates of immunization, increased likelihood and duration of breastfeeding, and increased parental care and engagement;

• The effects of early childcare and parental interaction can last long into adulthood and into many aspects of adult well-being and social and economic productivity; and

• As Congress works to develop a federal paid family leave program, it is important to ensure the benefits will outweigh the costs, and the benefits to children—not just to parents—should be included in that analysis.

Read the Research