

*Lawmakers introduce legislation to improve Family Medical Leave Act on 20th anniversary of its historic passage* □

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – On the 20th anniversary of the Family Medical Leave Act, Senator Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Congressman Steve Israel (D-N.Y.) are fighting to improve the law by allowing parents grieving from the death of their child to receive up to 12 weeks of job-protected time-off.

Passed in 1993, the Family Medical Leave Act allows parents to take extended, unpaid time-off to care for newborn babies, adopted children and family members with serious health conditions.

Tester's and Israel's Parental Bereavement Act ensures that the death of a child is treated like these other life-altering events, allowing parents time to grieve.

“Anytime a parent has to bury a child is, in my opinion, the most stressful and excruciating experience a family can go through,” Tester said. “Folks need time to grieve and sort out what has happened without having to worry about losing their jobs, and this common sense bill does just that.”

“Parents should never have to decide between their job and taking the proper time needed for both themselves and the rest of their family to mourn the death of a child,” Israel said. “It is simply common sense that they should be able to use FMLA leave to grieve for their loss. The legislation Sen. Tester and I introduced today will allow parents to take the time they need, knowing that their job will be protected.”

Tester, who said he was “shocked” that current law didn’t give mourning parents time-off, heard about the issue from Montanans, including a mother who lost her son but feared losing her job if she took time-off to grieve.

Israel was moved to introduce the legislation after hearing from constituent Matthew J. Weippert, who lost his 12-year old daughter from leukemia. Mr. Weippert buried his daughter on a Wednesday and had to go back to work the following Monday.

The bill is supported by 18 national organizations, including the Farley-Kluger Initiative.

“The mourning, grief and healing period after the loss of a child is too often ignored,” said Kelly Farley and Barry Kluger, who founded the initiative after the death of their children. “We believe Senator Tester’s and Congressman Israel’s legislation addresses this issue and urge our leaders to give those in pain the opportunity and time to heal.”

Research shows that most parents remain affected by the loss of a child for months after a child’s death. Parents who return to work too soon are also less productive.

The Parental Bereavement Act would not affect businesses with fewer than 50 employees. Tester’s bill is available online [here](#) . Rep Israel’s bill is available online [here](#) .