

FILM SYNOPSIS

ZERO WEEKS is the first feature documentary to explore America's desperate need for modern paid family leave policies. With the help of a variety of experts, we follow the historical arc of family and medical leave and how our nation arrived where it is now: lagging behind every other country in the world except for Papua New Guinea. The feature film makes an economic, social, medical, marital and global case for paid family leave by creating a poignant, hopeful and honest snapshot of how the lack of affordable time for caregiving impacts American families and business. The film follows various American families from different socioeconomic backgrounds as they are forced to choose between the family they love and the job they need. *ZERO WEEKS* introduces viewers to small businesses who are leading on leave, as well as doctors, economists, corporate leaders and elected officials who are making the case for paid leave. It also takes the viewer inside paid leave campaigns.



Abi, the film's youngest subject, exemplifies how the lack of paid medical leave can have drastic ripple effects throughout a family. Last year, Abi's father was diagnosed with leukemia. His employer fired him while he was in the hospital, just days after his diagnosis. The family lost their health insurance, their income and their home. When we meet Abi, she is considering dropping out of high school in order to work full time to support her family — a decision that wouldn't have been necessary had the family had paid medical leave.

Brian grew up in Georgia, a conservative southerner who believes in small government and self-made success. When Brian and his wife Krystina were pregnant with twins, they were ecstatic. Six months into her pregnancy, Krystina went into premature labor and tragically, the couple lost their twin girls. Brian was grief-stricken and worried for Krystina, who was suffering from separation anxiety, severe depression and traumatic shock. Brian's employer told him that he could take 3 days off to grieve for each baby. A short year after the loss of their girls, the couple became pregnant again. They had a beautiful, healthy baby girl in April 2016. Brian was told he could only take two days off.



When Jasmine was in her final month of pregnancy, she learned that paid maternity leave wasn't offered at the daycare center where she'd worked for years. She couldn't afford to go more than three weeks without a paycheck and her employer had promised a temp worker at least 8 weeks of employment. Jasmine spent her brief maternity leave looking for a new job. When she finally found one, it was two hours away. Juggling childcare along with a two-hour commute is not easy. Jasmine was unable to keep her job and currently relies on food stamps, Medicare and unemployment assistance to

get by. She desperately wants to work and is looking for another job closer to her home. Like many families in this country, having a baby knocked her out of the workforce and uprooted her financially stable life.

Kesha is a single mother who bravely faces every day despite an ongoing battle with breast cancer. As the sole provider for her family, she can't take off work to take care of herself. Without paid leave, she schedules her chemotherapy treatments during her lunch break. In the evening, she manages caring for her daughter, cooking and cleaning and helping with homework, despite her extreme fatigue and her own self-care needs. Kesha's doctor ordered her to take 8 weeks off to allow her body a small amount of healing so she can beat the cancer, but she must keep working to pay the bills.



FILM SYNOPSIS, continued



Octogenarian Ruby lost her sight six years ago. Recently, she underwent a complete knee replacement surgery and now requires more acute care during the recovery period. Ruby's daughter, Donna, honors Ruby's request to live with dignity and independence in the comfort of her own home. Their story represents the reality of millions of working Americans who must provide care for their aging parents in the midst of an unprecedented elder boom. As the aging population grows and professional caregivers remain in short supply, more people will need to rely on family members as primary caregivers.

In 1981, Ellen Bravo started working at Wisconsin Bell where she was told: "You can't take a sick day for five years." Her time at the phone company was stressful, having to choose between her family and her paycheck. Earlier she had no paid leave with either of her two pregnancies. She left Wisconsin Bell in 1982 to dedicate her career to gaining a more equitable workplace for all. Thirty-five years later, Ellen helps lead a network of broad coalitions working for feasible and winnable legislation that keeps people attached to the workforce and engaged with their families. Ellen's story embodies one of the through-lines in the film: that change is possible and it is happening.



Through these various film subjects, ZERO WEEKS puts a compassionate, inspiring face on the millions of Americans who are suffering because of our nation's lack of paid leave. Film has a unique power to advance public opinion and move public policy and will be a powerful tool for our allied partners.

