

# ZERO WEEKS

35 WEEKS

12 WEEKS | 12 WEEKS  
12 WEEKS

18 WEEKS

14 WEEKS

12 WEEKS

13 WEEKS

52 WEEKS

## PRESS KIT

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# ZERO WEEKS: QUICK FACTS

**Logline:** America's paid leave crisis and the cost of doing nothing.

**Runtime:** 86 minutes

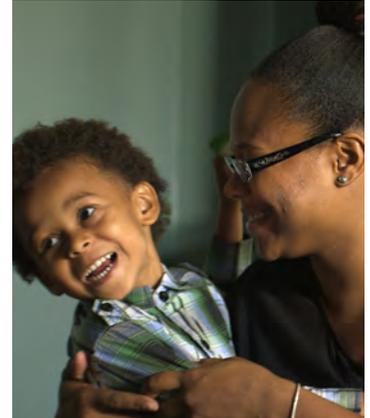
**Production Company:** Yellowing Productions, Chicago

**Festival Highlights:**

- WORLD PREMIERE: Camden International Film Festival, September 2017
- NEW YORK PREMIERE: DocNYC, November 2017
- WEST COAST PREMIERE: Portland Film Festival, November 2017

**Awards:**

- BEST DOCUMENTARY from International Women's Film Festival
- BEST EDITING from Colorado International Film Festival
- Focus Award for "Achievement in Directing" from Women in Film
- Culture Champion Award from Family Values @ Work in partnership with Labor Project for Working Families



**Film Boilerplate:** Most Americans agree that family comes first, but we are the only developed country without paid leave. In one of the richest nations in the world, having a baby, a medical emergency or an aging parent can be a trigger into poverty. Weaving powerful personal stories with insightful interviews, *ZERO WEEKS*, explores America's paid leave crisis and the cost of doing nothing. *ZERO WEEKS* is the fourth film by award-winning director, Ky Dickens, a female director with a track record of using her work to shift public opinion. To learn more or to view the film's trailer, visit [ZeroWeeks.com](http://ZeroWeeks.com).

**Quotes from Director Ky Dickens:**

"All of my films are birthed from necessity. Following the birth of my daughter, I was faced with the experience of inadequate maternity leave, which left me in emotional and financial distress. That experience became a gateway for awareness that millions of men and women face the same situation every year. The paid leave crisis does not only affect new parents, but anyone who has struggled with a personal injury or illness, or cared for a sick spouse or aging parent."

"My purpose as a filmmaker lies within the ability to tell stories that haven't been told before. I'm interested in digging beneath headlines and common perspectives, into stories that have been buried by time, injustice, ignorance or lack of interest. If history is commonly written by those with privilege, power, access and prominence, I want to tell the stories of those who have been forgotten, lost or left out. *ZERO WEEKS* is one of these. It illuminates how our country's lack of paid family leave hurts businesses and families alike."

**Quote from Ellen Bravo, co-director of Family Values @ Work and the "Agent of Change" featured in ZERO WEEKS:**

"The momentum behind the paid leave movement is undeniable. Activists all across the country have been fighting for policies at the state and national level; in just over a year, we've doubled the number of states (from 3 to 6) which passed paid leave. Whether you are nursing a newborn, getting chemo, or taking care of an aging parent while trying to earn a living, the lack of paid leave in this country impacts almost all of us. This film will be a powerful tool to create awareness and engagement."

Interviews with Ky Dickens or Ellen Bravo are available upon request. Please email [press@zeroweeks.com](mailto:press@zeroweeks.com)

Images from the film, promotional graphics and other resources are available at [zeroweeks.com/press-downloads/](http://zeroweeks.com/press-downloads/)

# PAID LEAVE: QUICK FACTS

Only 14% of U.S. workers have access to paid leave (Pew Research Center)

76% of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck (Bankrate Financial Security Index)

About 60% of the American workforce is eligible for the current Family and Medical Leave Act guaranteeing unpaid leave. Of those that qualify, only 48% can't take unpaid leave because they can't afford to go without a paycheck. (Department of Labor)

With access to paid family leave:

- women are more likely to stay in the workforce and off public assistance
- families are less likely to declare bankruptcy
- children have better long-term health
- infants whose parents spend time at home during their first year have long-lasting effects on their eventual academic performance

(Center for Economic and Policy Research, Center for American Progress)

1 in 4 women return to work within 2 weeks of having a baby. (In These Times magazine)



There is a looming elder care crisis: Every 8 seconds, a "baby boomer" turns 65. By 2025, 1 in 5 Americans will be over 65. (U.S. Census Bureau)

Of the 39 industrialized countries, the United States ranks dead last in Maternal Health, Child Health and Family-friendly policies (Center for Disease Control, World Economic Forum)

Three states have implemented paid leave policies: California, Rhode Island and New Jersey. New York state, Washington D.C. and Washington state have passed legislation and are preparing for implementation.

Since California instituted paid leave in 2004, 91% of employers said it either boosted profits or had no effect. They also reported higher productivity, higher morale and lower turnover. (Center for Economic and Policy Research, Center for American Research)

More than 20 states will explore paid leave legislation in the coming year. (Family Values @ Work)

Many countries with paid leave have stronger female labor force participation than the United States. In fact, if women between the ages of 25 and 54 participated in the U.S. labor force at the same rate as they do in Canada or Germany, the U.S. GDP would increase by roughly 3.5 %, which translates into more than \$500 billion of additional economic activity. (U.S. Dept of Labor)



Countries guaranteeing leave to care for personal or family health had the highest levels of economic competitiveness (Human Rights Watch)

Women comprise about 47 percent of the workforce in the United States and two-thirds of the low-wage workforce. (New Republic)

For every dollar that a white man earns, moms earn 73 cents; single moms earn 56 cents; and moms of color earn even less than that. (Nationals Women's Law Center.)

# 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.



# IMPACT CAMPAIGN

Our goal is to encourage businesses and lawmakers to create more family-friendly policies. We also want to build broad awareness about paid leave amongst the general public and working families. Despite quantitative research, Americans are still unclear on whether they have access to paid leave, how public policy might make a difference, and what role they could play in bringing it about.

We feel strongly that the film needs to be released as quickly as possible to work in concert with the 20+ states and hundreds of businesses organizing for paid leave in 2018 and beyond. We have engaged Working Films, a national leader in the use of documentary media for social impact, to execute the Zero Weeks Impact Campaign. Working Films is expanding our strategic partnerships and advising our distribution and impact strategy.



Once the film is released, Working Films will manage regional festival screenings, live screening events, a web-based media campaign, and grassroots viewing parties. Screenings across the nation will point audiences to meaningful ways to act and generate press around the issue. We have designed the impact campaign to be meaningful in any community across the country, however we are placing additional emphasis on screenings and discussions with business leaders, healthcare communities and in states where paid leave campaigns are near the tipping point, as well as places that are still developing, including conservative-leaning states. Additionally, we will engage unique interest groups impacted by the issue of paid leave in the places where they naturally convene: community centers, places of worship, business schools, chambers of commerce, union halls, etc.



Our current impact campaign partners include:

- AARP
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- Caring Across Generations
- Center for American Progress
- Center for Paid Leave Leadership
- Fairygodboss
- Family Values @ Work
- Jobs With Justice
- Main Street Alliance
- Mi Familia Vota
- MomsRising
- National Partnership for Women & Families
- PL+US
- Women Employed
- Women and Girls Foundation
- Zero to Three

# FILMMAKERS



## KY DICKENS, DIRECTOR | PRODUCER

Award winning filmmaker Ky Dickens is best known for her highly acclaimed documentary work, her emotionally compelling commercial reel and her endless list of questions.

Ky directed the highly-acclaimed documentary *SOLE SURVIVOR*, which profiles four survivors of otherwise fatal plane crashes. *Sole Survivor* was acquired by CNN Films for broadcast and theatrical release. It premiered on the network in January, 2014 and was named the "Best Feature Film" at the 2013 BMA Awards. It is currently available on Amazon Prime and iTunes.

Ky's 2009 feature documentary, *FISH OUT OF WATER*, won four juror prizes and secured international distribution by Netflix & First Run Features. The film has been hailed as a "tool for reconciliation between the church and LGBTQ community." It was translated into Spanish, Russian, Italian and French Creole and has screened at over 500 churches and universities. The film was inducted into the United States Library of Congress in 2011 for its instrumental role in changing the national perspective on LGBTQ human rights.

Ky's other soon-to-be-released film, *THE CITY THAT SOLD AMERICA* (2018), is about Chicago's crucial, yet often-overlooked place in American consumer culture. The film is a sequel to Emmy-award winning *ART & COPY*.

In addition to her feature film work, Ky directs commercials for some of the biggest brands in America. Her clients include Tylenol, Sears, Hallmark, McDonald's, Koehler, Purina, Huggies, Ronald McDonald House Charities and Wrangler. Ky is featured on the highly competitive "Free The Bid" list of the top recommended female directors in America. She is represented by STORY.TV (based in LA and Chicago). Ky graduated with Magna Cum Laude honors from Vanderbilt University. She lives in Chicago with her wife and daughter.



## ALEXIS JAWORSKI, PRODUCER

Alexis has worked for more than 15 years in arts and entertainment with a focus on audience development, communication strategy and media production for some of the country's most vital artistic organizations, including Steppenwolf Theatre Company and Hubbard Street Dance Chicago. She has also served as the Director of Marketing & Communications for The Joffrey Ballet and River North Dance Chicago.

Incorporating film production into her personal and professional interests since 2008, Alexis was Co-Producer on Ky Dickens' 2013 feature documentary *SOLE SURVIVOR*, and served as Associate Producer on the forthcoming film *THE CITY THAT SOLD AMERICA*.

Alexis received a B.A. in Psychology and Art History from University of Vermont and her M.A. in Media Studies from DePaul University. She also works as a producer and production coordinator for commercial and non-profit media projects, for clients including McDonald's, Grubhub, Greenheart International, Rotary International and Lambda Legal.

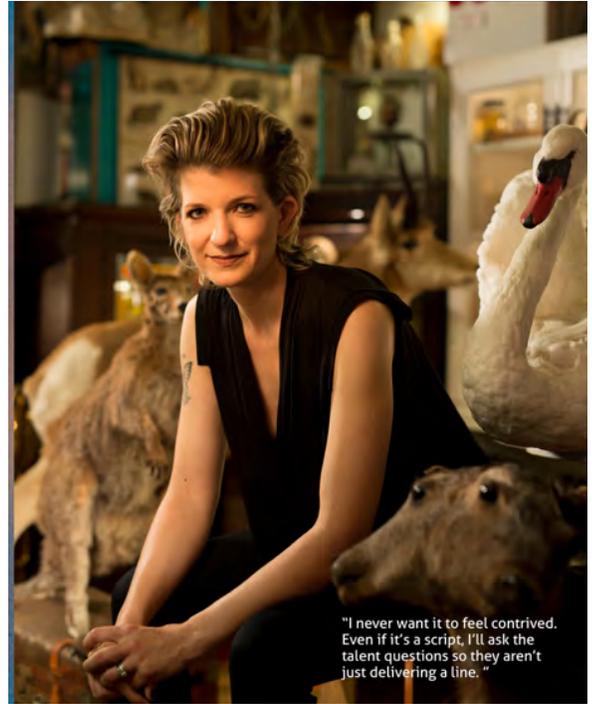
# PRESS

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## *Why Family Leave is Finally Gaining Steam*

We seem to be on the cusp of a watershed moment—and it's been a long time coming. As the FMLA's 25-year anniversary approaches, activists who have been pushing for policies that help working families say the same thing: the tide is finally turning.



## *Ky Dickens: Chicago's Taxidermist of Truth*

The Chicago-based director preserves real-life stories — from survivor's guilt to the history of advertising in the Windy City — for future generations.



## *DOC NYC 2017 Women Directors:*

### *Meet Ky Dickens—"Zero Weeks"*

'Zero Weeks' will premiere at the 2017 DOC NYC film festival on November 11.



## *Heart-Wrenching New Doc Nails What The U.S. Gets Wrong About Paid Leave*

'Zero Weeks,' a new documentary by award-winning director Ky Dickens, takes a deeper look at paid leave and lays out the case for having guaranteed paid leave for every American worker.



## *A Movement Grows Across the Country for Paid Family Leave*

When filmmaker Ky Dickens learned she was about to become a mother, her doctor advised her that she would need at least 12 weeks of maternity leave to heal....



## *'Zero Weeks' Film Explores Abysmal U.S. Family Leave Laws*

Dickens' fourth documentary, follows families who are struggling to care for family members — new infants, sick spouses, aging parents — with little to no paid time off.



## *Ky Dickens appears on Anderson Cooper 360*

Anderson speaks with 'Sole Survivor' director Ky Dickens about her interviews with the people who survived the seemingly impossible.



## *What Happens When You Deny a Filmmaker Paid Leave? She Makes a Doc About It*

It's a policy, or lack thereof, that filmmaker Dickens didn't need to research before tackling the subject in her latest documentary because she lived it.