



**JEWES UNITED
FOR JUSTICE**

original art by Liora Ostroff

THE FOUR CHILDREN

The haggadah presents four questioning children who approach the seder in four different ways. At traditional seders, we begin with the wise child and end with the child who doesn't know how to ask questions. But here, we have flipped the order. Why is this night different from all other nights? Because on this night, we may have begun by not knowing what questions to ask or even what the issues are, but like the child who asks the most probing questions, we will end up wiser, knowing that all Maryland workers deserve a paid family and medical leave program so that they will not have to choose between their families and their work.

The Child Who Doesn't Know How to Ask

This child doesn't know that they can question anything at all. They accept the reality they are handed. They are complacent, assuming that they can't have the time they need to care for themselves or a loved one.

We encourage this child to question more, by telling them how many other countries offer Paid Family and Medical Leave. We tell them that pediatricians recommend a minimum of 12 weeks of parental paid time off,²¹ and how the Time to Care Act makes it economically feasible for employers of all sizes to provide this benefit. We tell them that Paid Family and Medical Leave should be seen as a human right, and encourage them to start questioning the lack of justice and dignity present in our state.

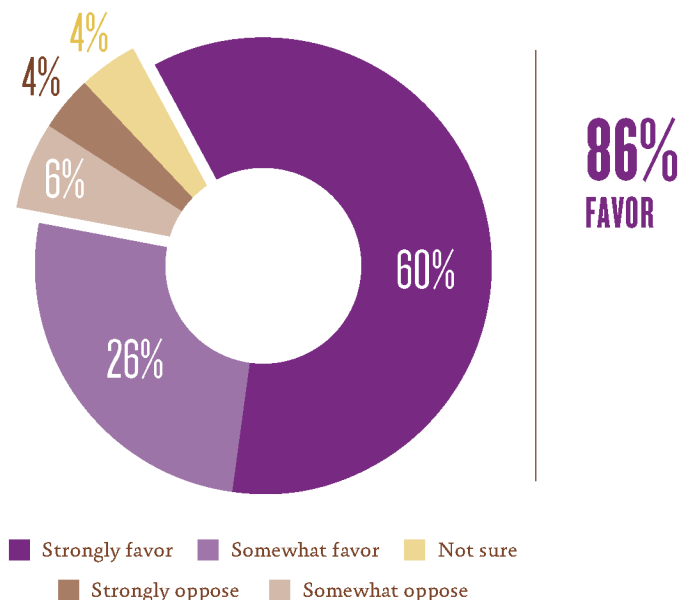
The Simple Child

The simple child asks: Why does this mother go back to work so soon after the birth of her child? Why doesn't that father take time off from work to bond with his child? Why is this grandmother alone in the hospital? Why isn't anyone with her, looking out for her? Why is this ill person still working instead of staying home to rest and heal?

We respond to the simple child with a simple, yet devastating answer: they can't afford not to.

The vast majority of people in Maryland are in favor of a paid family and medical leave law.²² To those who oppose it, we need to explain that the program is affordable, and how much good it will do to stabilize family finances, improve the health and well being of new parents, and reduce costly employee turnover.

The Time to Care Act will ensure that workers can keep earning income when they take the time they need to care for themselves or loved ones, so that they no longer have to choose between working and caring for themselves and their families.



²¹ [Paid Family Leave In The US: A Pediatrician's View : Shots - Health News](#)

²² [Time To Care, Maryland Family Network](#)

The Wicked Child

The wicked child separates themselves from the rest of the community by asking, “what does this mean to *you*?” For “you” and not for “us.” A traditional interpretation teaches us that the wicked child does not think that our traditions are relevant to their own life.

In our modern struggle for justice, the wicked child is ignorant of the vulnerabilities and suffering of others in their community, unaware that there are wrongs to be righted. Perhaps they are financially able to take unpaid leave from work when needed, or they already have generous family leave benefits from their employer.²³ Perhaps they don’t plan to have children, they are healthy, their parents aren’t ill. They look around and see only others who are like them, and wonder, “why are you bothering yourself with this issue?”

This child must be exposed to a wider perspective, to life experiences beyond their own. As a community, we must work to develop this child’s sense of curiosity about and empathy for those they see as apart from themselves.

To learn more about others’ stories, we recommend the documentary [Zero Weeks](#), available for rent or purchase on YouTube or other platforms, which features JUFJ campaigning for paid family and medical leave in DC.

The Wise Child

The wise child seeks to delve deeper into the impact paid family and medical leave would have on communities, and asks hard questions aimed at finding real solutions. The wise child asks: How much paid leave time is ideal, and what percentage of wage replacement is enough to sustain families? Why is it beneficial to have government mandated and supported family and medical leave, rather than allowing individual companies to determine their own leave policies? How do we encourage people of all genders to equally divide caregiving responsibilities so that women do not experience negative workplace effects? What other support might people need during a time when they incur additional expenses, such as medical bills or the cost of raising a child?

As it is written in the Torah, the wise child proposes:

כִּי־יִמּוֹךְ אָחִיךָ וּמָטָה יָדוֹ עִמָּךְ וְהִחֲזַקְתָּ בּוֹ גֵר וְתוֹשֵׁב וְחֵי עִמָּךְ

Strengthen the person so that he does not fall and become dependent on others.²⁴

The wise child is eager to partake in the Jewish tradition of questioning the world in which we live. We should encourage this child’s passion and curiosity by engaging them in conversation and helping them learn from those who are directly impacted by these issues. We must also teach this child that questioning is not merely about learning, but also seeking to act in a manner that helps promote justice in the community.

²³ Under the current version of the Time to Care Act, employers that offer paid leave that is equal to or more generous than the benefits of the bill can continue to offer such benefits to their employees and “opt out” of participating in the new program. In such a case, neither the employer nor the employee would have payroll deductions applied.

²⁴ Leviticus 25:35