



Paid Family & Medical Leave

Overview

Washington state is one of eight states that provides a paid family and medical leave program – with five more states that have recently passed similar laws.

Washington's program was passed in 2017 – at the time the state senate was controlled by a Republican-led Majority Coalition Caucus, and this was a Republican-sponsored bill.

Because the policy was a negotiation between both major parties, our program includes key priorities for workers and important protections for businesses

Importantly, Washington's program includes an adherence to the federal leave law – meaning for the most part, if employers have requirements under the federal law to hold a position open and continue health care benefits, they have the same requirements under the state law.

Additionally, Washington's program has struggled with solvency mostly because of the overwhelming popularity of the program. It has quickly and consistently surpassed all usage projections relied on when creating the program.

Since the program began delivering benefits in 2020, we've seen repeated attempts to alter its carefully negotiated foundational elements.

This year, [House Bill 1213](#) was introduced and would remove program alignment with the federal leave requirements, which mandate employers with more than 50 employees reserve a position for workers on protected leave if the worker has worked for that employer for 12 months and worked at least 1,250 hours.

The proposal will require that employers of all sizes hold positions and continue to pay health care benefits while the employee is out.

We've heard members – this proposal will create significant hardships.

Talking Points

- Year-over-year turnover in the hospitality industry is 113%. We do everything in our power to keep our employees, even if they must leave for a life event.

- We routinely rehire young people and students returning home for summer or on breaks, not only because we care about our employees, but because it makes business sense to do so.
- Unfortunately, there are times when employers cannot hold a position open. The hospitality industry is seasonal. Often employees with specific skill sets are hired for specific events or promotions. We can't pause life events and schedule them around seasons – and because of this, safety nets already exist for these scenarios.
 - PFML benefits are portable – you don't have to be employed at the time you use them, and they aren't tied to your employer.
 - If a worker is ready to return to work but the employer was unable to hold a position, the worker can receive unemployment benefits – the most generous in the country.
- The proposal will add significant costs for employers at a time when we can least afford it.
- If you are an employer with fewer than 50 employees and offer health care, remind your lawmaker that this is an optional benefit you provide – and one with significant costs.

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