

Tennessee Offers State Employees Paid Family Leave

State investing in attracting and retaining top talent

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Today, Gov. Bill Lee announced that Tennessee will provide paid family leave for state employees. The Governor signed an Executive Order today directing the Tennessee Department of Human Resources to issue the new policy effective March 1.

“Strong families make for strong communities, and I am proud that Tennessee will lead the nation in supporting our employees,” said Gov. Bill Lee. “This is an impactful investment in the state workforce and will allow us to continue to attract and retain the best workforce possible.”

While 69% of full-time working Americans believe that receiving paid parental leave is important when looking for a job, only 17% of employees across the U.S. have access to it. One additional month of paid family leave is associated with a 13% drop in infant mortality.

“Paid family leave will improve quality of life for state employees both at work and at home. I am grateful to Governor Lee and Senator Dickerson for making this a priority,” said Lt. Governor Randy McNally.

“I appreciate Governor Lee’s desire to support our state employees through this initiative, and I support the idea of allowing new mothers and fathers opportunities to spend more quality time with their newly adopted or newborn children. I look forward to working with the Governor, the House and Senate, Rep. Helton and our Fiscal Review Committee to determine the best ways we can continue to strengthen our Tennessee families,” said Speaker Cameron Sexton.

“Paid family leave for state employees builds upon our recent efforts creating safe, nurturing environments for our children, while strengthening bonds between parents and their newly adopted or newborn sons and daughters. This important benefit levels the playing field for our state departments, agencies, and the General Assembly so we can attract and retain the best and brightest employees. I applaud Governor Lee for this pro-family initiative because it supports those who work tirelessly on behalf of this state to make it the best in the entire nation,” said House Majority Leader William Lamberth.

“I am pleased to sponsor this bill so our state government can continue to retain the finest employees possible,” said Chairman Steve Dickerson.

“Tennessee is proud to be a pro-family state, and this initiative strengthens our commitment to families and is a step in the right direction. We have all experienced scenarios where we have had to choose between work and family. This initiative ensures our state employees will no longer have to make that difficult choice, and I am honored to serve as co-prime sponsor of this legislation in the House,” said Representative Esther Helton.

This new policy confirms Tennessee state government’s position as a pro-family employer while also improving its ability to effectively serve taxpayers by reducing turnover rates for high performing employees and reducing long-term state health care costs.

The expanded paid family leave will apply to all state executive branch employees subject to the TEAM Act and will not include a mandate on private business. Included in this policy is parental leave, making Tennessee the tenth state employer to offer benefits to parents in addition to the federal government. Qualifying events will be consistent with the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The new policy will go into effect on March 1 to provide sufficient time for the Department of Human Resources to draft policy guidance, train managers, and ensure accurate tracking of time and leave.