

Washington State Legislation

What is the Legislation

Washington State is implementing a new Paid Family and Medical Leave program over the next year. Payroll contributions into the program from both employees and employers started this January. Starting in January of 2020, workers in the state of Washington will have access to up to 12 weeks of paid time off. It applies to anyone who needs maternity or paternity leave, or to care for a child (including fostered or adopted) or family member with a serious medical condition.

Pros:

- Increased talent retention: employees would have the flexibility to take time off when they need to, while continuing to maintain their quality of life
 - It can cost up to 6-9 months of the annual salary to replace a worker ([SHRM](#))
- Allows for women to earn wages that are currently being lost during maternity leave, or caring for children, themselves or other family members
 - Women can lose up to 25% of their annual wages while on leave dependent on length of time taken for leave, and short disability and vacation options offered through their employer
 - Provides financial stability for men on paternity leave
- Aligns the US with most other advanced nations offering such benefits
 - US is one of three nations that don't guarantee paid maternity leave ([International Labor Organization, 2014](#))

Cons:

- Increased employer costs and potentially even costs for employees and contractors, plus the cost of training others during the workers' leave
 - Could lead to an increase in employee requests for policy changes allotting additional paid time off for those not protected by family paid leave
 - Could lead to increased costs in recruiting or temporary staffing needs to cover absent workers
 - Could lead to increased overtime wages for the workloads of employees covering absent worker
- Could cause HR challenges regarding discrimination for people on unpaid disability
 - Could lead to employees to feel discriminated or penalized for not having families
- Increases Federal Government involvement, some people think this kind of legislation should be left up to the states to decide