



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A TWELVE WEEK PAID PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY FINANCIAL IMPACT ANALYSIS AND REPORT

WHEREAS, the United States is the only high-income country, and one of only seven countries in the world that does not mandate paid maternity leave; and

WHEREAS, beginning on January 1 of 2023, City of Chicago employees will be entitled to twelve weeks of paid parental leave for both birthing and non-birthing parents. This is an increase from the previously allowed four to six weeks of paid leave for the birthing parent and two weeks of leave for non-birthing parents; and

WHEREAS, Cook County provides employees with four weeks of paid leave for a birthing parent that delivers non-surgically and six weeks for a surgical delivery. Non-birthing parents are entitled to two weeks of paid leave. Employees that adopt a child are entitled to two weeks of paid leave; and

WHEREAS, paid parental leave correlates with reduced financial stress, and enhanced mental and physical health outcomes for parents and children. Studies make a correlative finding between longer leave time and overall improved family benefit; and

WHEREAS, less than eight weeks of paid leave is linked to a reduction in overall health status and increased depression for birthing parents. For every week of paid leave allotted to a mother, there is a two percent reduction in her likelihood of designating her mental health as poor. Research shows that when the birthing parents have paid time off, there is a 51% decrease in the risk of rehospitalization due to complications. When the non-birthing parent also takes parental leave, both caregivers see an increased benefit to their family health from lower stress levels, leading to reduced physical complications and improved health benefits to babies; and

WHEREAS, studies identify the link between parent-child bonding during the first months of life and increased cognitive brain function in babies as a crucial identifier in overall positive health outcomes. This link also improves the baby's behavioral and socioemotional skills, confirming adequate paid parental leave can improve mental health over the life span of a child. Paid leave is also associated with better language skills in toddlers; and

WHEREAS, health outcomes are better for babies in areas where there are longer paid parental leave policies. Paid leave greater than 12 weeks increases timely infant vaccination, and parents have been found to be more likely to take their infants to all child wellness check-ups in their first year. These health benefits for infants carry on into their childhood and adulthood; and

WHEREAS, research suggests that underprivileged families may benefit the most from longer parental leave policies, due to better birth outcomes, fewer early term births, increased access to medical care, and more economic stability. One study found that the introduction of paid maternity leave in five states (California, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island) led to a reduction in low birthweight and preterm births, especially for Black mothers; and

WHEREAS, a consistent parental paid leave policy for all parents regardless of how an employee chooses to become a parent leads to equitability for all family structures; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cook County Bureau of Finance prepare a fiscal note assessing the

financial impact to the County of a blanket 12-week paid parental leave policy for full-time Cook County employees. The fiscal note shall be presented to the Board of Commissioners within 90 days of the date of this Resolution.