



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES FULL TWELVE WEEKS OF PAID PARENTAL LEAVE FOR ALL CITY EMPLOYEES

City reaches agreement with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) to create a progressive paid parental leave for all City employees

CHICAGO — Today, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, with Department of Human Resources (DHR) reached an agreement with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) to expand the City's paid parental leave policy effective January 1, 2023. Under the new policy, all City employees will receive up to twelve (12) weeks paid parental leave regardless of whether they are the birthing or non-birthing parent. With this expansion that will apply to approximately 32,000 employees, the City becomes the one of the largest cities in the Midwest and across the country to have such a progressive and innovative policy.

This policy applies to those growing their family by birth, adoption, or foster care, as well as for those acting as a surrogate. Employees will receive 100% of their pay for up to the entirety of the 12 weeks. To be eligible for this benefit, City employees must be eligible for Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), meaning they must work for the City for at least 12 months before taking leave and worked at least 1,250 hours during the 12-month period immediately preceding the leave.

"The pandemic taught us many important lessons, two of which are that families need help now more than ever, and unpaid care work is a detriment to our labor market," said Mayor Lightfoot. "Ensuring parents have time to bond with their new child, heal from birth, and receive their wages will have long-lasting positive impacts on our employees and city. I call on my colleagues in the private sector to join me in offering this critical benefit, which undeniably builds equity within our workforce."

The City's prior policy had not been revised since 2011 and provided up to four or six weeks of paid leave for birth parents depending on the type of birth and only two weeks for non-birth parents.



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Expanding this policy aligns with Mayor Lightfoot’s public health goals of closing the racial disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes and addressing gender and racial inequity in access to good quality jobs. Additionally, this policy change aligns with the recommendations of the [report released](#) in June on the impacts of COVID-19 on working women in Chicago.

According to Family Values at Work — a movement network of grassroots organizers and coalitions in more than two dozen states working toward economic, racial, and gender justice — women who take paid leave after a child’s birth are more likely to be employed the following year and report increased wages than women who do not take leave. First-time mothers who utilized paid leave were 26.3% less likely to quit their jobs and 18.2% more likely to work for the same employer after the birth of their first child. Additionally, paid leave policies create stronger parity in caregiving roles between the birthing parent and the non-birthing parent.

“By providing paid parental leave to all City employees, the City of Chicago is setting a progressive example that we hope more employers will follow,” said Cherita Ellens, President and CEO of Women Employed. “No working parent should have to choose between their paycheck and time to bond with their new child, and removing that barrier is an important step to advancing equity. It is why Women Employed supports paid family and medical leave for all of Illinois, so everyone can afford to care for themselves and their family members.”

“Expansion of paid family leave is a critical addition to the City of Chicago’s efforts to ensure that all families with newborns have the support they need to thrive,” said Allison Arwady, M.D., Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health. “Beyond the important economic benefits, paid family leave is a proven strategy for improving the physical and mental health of the whole family and people giving birth and their babies. This policy change — and the example it sets for other Chicago employers — is one of the ways we will make progress on closing the gaps in maternal and infant health in Chicago.”

“Providing time to bond and heal for new parents is a critical benefit and also a tool to increase retention and diversify the City’s workforce,” said Chris Owen, Commissioner of the Department of Human Resources. “I am proud of this expansion, as I know it will impact thousands of families serving our great city.”

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