

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS GABRIELA COLETTA ZAPATA, BREADON, CULPEPPER, FITZGERALD, FLYNN, LOUIJEUNE, MURPHY, PEPÉN, SANTANA, AND WORRELL



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY OF BOSTON CODE, SECTION 5-5.20, PAID PARENTAL LEAVE FOR CITY OF BOSTON EMPLOYEES

WHEREAS: Paid Parental Leave is an essential workplace benefit that allows employees to take compensated time away from work to care for and bond with a newborn or newly adopted child without sacrificing economic security; *and*

WHEREAS: Workplace experience research continues to demonstrate that paid parental leave improves health outcomes for parents and children, strengthens workforce participation, and supports employee recruitment, retention, reducing turnover and recruitment costs, increasing morale, and promoting a stable and experienced municipal workforce; *and*

WHEREAS: The City of Boston first established Paid Parental Leave for City employees in 2015 and subsequently expanded the policy in 2021 to provide up to twelve weeks of leave, reflecting the City's commitment to supporting working families and setting a municipal standard for equitable workplace benefits; *and*

WHEREAS: Utilization of the City's Paid Parental Leave benefit has grown substantially, rising from 181 employees in 2021 to 313 employees in 2025, demonstrating that paid parental leave is an increasingly relied-upon benefit across City departments and that the number of employees affected by the current graduated wage structure continues to grow year over year; *and*

WHEREAS: Chapter 5, Section 5.20 of the Boston City Code currently provides employees with up to twelve weeks of Paid Parental Leave with a graduated pay structure of 100 percent base wages for the first four weeks, 75 percent base wages for the following four weeks, and 50 percent base wages for the remaining four weeks; *and*

WHEREAS: The City of Boston continues to prioritize workforce stability, employee retention, and equitable employment practices amid rising costs of living and increased demands on working families; *and*

WHEREAS: Boston consistently ranks among the most expensive cities in the United States for housing, childcare, and daily living expenses, making the financial impact of reduced wage replacement during parental leave particularly acute for City

employees and their growing families at a critical moment of family formation;
and

WHEREAS: Partial wage replacement during parental leave may create financial hardship for employees at the moment they are experiencing significant family transitions, often requiring the use of accrued sick leave, vacation time, or other earned benefits to maintain full income; *and*

WHEREAS: Under the current policy, employees seeking to receive full wages during the seventy-five percent (75%) and fifty percent (50%) periods of their leave are required to surrender separately earned sick leave to supplement the difference, effectively penalizing employees for accessing a benefit to which they are entitled and diminishing the value of a distinct, independently earned form of compensation; *and*

WHEREAS: Ensuring full wage replacement throughout the entirety of Paid Parental Leave advances equitable access to the benefit, supports employee well-being, and aligns the City of Boston with best practices adopted by peer municipalities and leading public employers; *and*

WHEREAS: The City of Boston's policy appropriately includes loss of pregnancy as an event triggering Paid Parental Leave, recognizing that pregnancy loss can have significant physical, emotional, and financial impacts on employees and families. Parents and prospective parents may experience pregnancy loss through miscarriage, medical termination, or stillbirth and deserve clear, consistent workplace protections without requiring reliance on alternative forms of leave; *and*

WHEREAS: Strengthening the City's Paid Parental Leave ordinance to provide 100 percent base pay for the full twelve-week leave period will advance the City's goals of workforce equity, retention, and family stability while maintaining Boston's leadership as a model employer; **NOW THEREFORE**

Be it ordained by the City Council of Boston as follows:

That the City of Boston Code, Ordinances, Chapter 5, Section 5.20, Paid Parental Leave for City of Boston Employees, shall be amended to provide employees on paid parental leave with one hundred percent (100%) of base pay throughout the full twelve (12) weeks of afforded leave, as set forth in the following amendments:

5-5.20 Paid Parental Leave for City of Boston Employees.

The City of Boston Code, Ordinances, Chapter 5, Section 5.20, shall be amended and replaced by the following:

Section 1.

The City of Boston Code, Ordinances, Chapter 5, Section 5.20 is hereby amended by striking the following language from division (A):

“female and male”

Section 2.

The City of Boston Code, Ordinances, Chapter 5, Section 5.20 is hereby amended by striking the following language from division (A):

“his or her”

and inserting in its place the following:

“their”

Section 3.

The City of Boston Code, Ordinances, Chapter 5, Section 5.20 is hereby amended by striking the following language from division (B):

“his or her”

and inserting in its place the following:

“their”

Section 4.

The City of Boston Code, Ordinances, Chapter 5, Section 5.20 is hereby amended by striking the following language from division (B):

“the first four weeks, 75% of his or her base wages for the following four weeks and 50% of base wages for the remaining four weeks. Employees shall be eligible to use any accrued leave in order to receive compensation up to 100% of base pay during the weeks reimbursed at the rates of 75% and 50%.”

and inserting in its place the following:

“all twelve (12) weeks.”

Section 5. Severability

The provisions in this ordinance are severable. If any part or provision of this ordinance, or the application of this ordinance to any person or circumstance, is held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this ordinance shall not be affected by such holding and shall continue to have full force and effect.

Section 6. Effective Date

The provisions of this ordinance shall be effective immediately upon passage.

Filed on: August 26, 2026

Current Code:

5-5.20 Paid Parental Leave for City Employees.

(A) The city shall implement paid parental leave for all of its exempt ~~female and male~~ employees and all other employees covered by collective bargaining agreements whose agreements explicitly provide for this benefit for the employee, for the purpose of caring for ~~his or her~~ **their** newborn or newly adopted child or children. This leave shall apply equally to parents regardless of gender, as well as to same-sex couples, in the event of a natural birth by any method, adoption, surrogacy and loss of pregnancy. Employees who have worked for the city for a minimum of one year are eligible for the full duration of paid parental leave.

(B) The paid parental leave shall be up to 12 weeks long, and may be taken by day or week anytime during the first year after the birth or adoption of the child or children. The leave period is fixed regardless of the number of children born or adopted by the employee. During the leave period, the employee shall be paid 100% of ~~his or her~~ **their** base wages for ~~all twelve weeks the first four weeks, 75% of his or her base wages for the following four weeks and 50% of base wages for the remaining four weeks. Employees shall be eligible to use any accrued leave in order to receive compensation up to 100% of base pay during the weeks reimbursed at the rates of 75% and 50%.~~ This paid leave will occur concurrently with and count towards the following leaves for which the employee may be eligible: the federally mandated 12 weeks of Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA", being 29 U.S.C. §§ 2611 et seq.) leave, eight weeks of Massachusetts Parental Leave Act ("MPLA", being M.G.L. Chapter 149, Section 105D, and M.G.L. Chapter 151B, Section 4(11A)) leave and up to 12 months of unpaid leave due to childbirth, adoption or loss of pregnancy offered by the city.

(C) The number of paid parental leave periods employees may take is unlimited over the duration of their employment with the city, but employees are only eligible for one 12-week paid leave per birth, adoption or loss of pregnancy.

(D) If both parents work for the city, each is entitled to a 12-week leave period as described in division (B) above and they may take their parental leave periods concurrently, subsequently or in any other combination they wish.

(E) The Director of Human Resources for the city shall have full authority to issue policies relative to paid parental leave benefits offered pursuant to this Section for any purpose, including, but not limited to, notification requirements for employees requesting leave, employee eligibility and documentation requirements for births, adoptions or loss of pregnancy.