

**Minnesota’s New Paid Family and Medical Leave Act: Benefits for All**

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Minnesota passed the Minnesota Paid Family Medical Leave Act in 2023, which provides paid leave for workers who take anywhere between 12 and 20 weeks of leave for “medical leave, bonding, or caring for a family member.”<sup>1</sup> This new program, often referred to as Minnesota Paid Leave (MPL), offers broad leave coverage for employees seeking leave for a variety of reasons.<sup>2</sup> The highly anticipated MPL went into effect on January 1, 2026.<sup>3</sup> The MPL was initially sponsored by Rep. Ruth Richardson (DFL-Mendota Heights) and Sen. Erin Maye Quade (DFL-Apple Valley).<sup>4</sup> MPL will be managed by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), whose final rules on the law were published in June 2025.<sup>5</sup>

MPL is not unique, as eleven other states have also implemented similar social insurance models, which have been highly successful.<sup>6</sup> The United States lags behind other countries in national paid leave, as the United States is one of six countries that fails to provide national paid leave for employees.<sup>7</sup> MPL will help ““make time for care . . . improve retention, performance and

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<sup>1</sup> Press Release, Office of Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Petty Flanagan, Governor Walz Signs Paid Family and Medical Leave Bill Into Law (May 25, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> *MN Paid Leave Law*, COUNCIL 5 AFSCME, <https://afscmemn.org/mn-paid-leave-law> (last visited Dec. 30, 2025).

<sup>3</sup> Minnesota Paid Leave Takes Effect Jan. 1, 2026, LEAGUE OF MINN. CITIES (Dec. 8, 2025), <https://www.lmc.org/news-publications/news/all/minnesota-paid-leave-takes-effect-on-jan-1-2026/#>.

<sup>4</sup> *Family, Medical Leave Law Allows Workers Up to 20 Weeks of Annual Paid Time Off*, MINN. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, <https://www.house.mn.gov/NewLaws/story/2023/5501> (last visited Dec. 30, 2025).

<sup>5</sup> MINN. R. 3317 (2025).

<sup>6</sup> *Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML)*, MINN. COUNCIL OF NONPROFITS, <https://minnesotanonprofits.org/public-policy/pfml#resources> (last visited Dec. 30, 2025).

<sup>7</sup> *States Leading on Leave: A Playbook on Winning Paid Family and Medical Leave*, STATE INNOVATION EXCH. (Sept. 26, 2023), [https://stateinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/States-Leading-on-Leave\\_A-Playbook-on-Winning-Paid-Family-and-Medical-Leave.pdf](https://stateinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/States-Leading-on-Leave_A-Playbook-on-Winning-Paid-Family-and-Medical-Leave.pdf); Claire Cane Miller, *The World ‘Has Found a Way to Do This’: The*

morale on the job” according to DEED Commissioner Matt Varilek.<sup>8</sup> Prior to MPL, “disparities based on race, income, geography, and employer size” created inequitable access to paid time off for employees and employers in Minnesota.<sup>9</sup>

In its most basic terms, the MPL will require “[m]ost Minnesota employers . . . to provide employees with 12 weeks of family leave and 12 weeks of medical leave. Annual time off will be capped at 20 weeks.”<sup>10</sup> Protections offered by MPL include the following: medical leave; bonding leave to promote a healthy transition for caregivers after adoption, birth, or foster placement; caring leave to allow for an employees to care for an ailing family member who has a serious health condition; safety leave for the employee or a family member “to respond to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking;” and military family leave.<sup>11</sup> The new program will be funded through a .88% payroll tax deduction split between employers and employees.<sup>12</sup> Almost all employers and employees qualify for this program, including those who are in full-time, part-time, seasonal, and temporary roles.<sup>13</sup>

The new MPL act offers greater coverage for employees than the current federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), creating increased flexibility for employees and families and reducing previous disparities that created inequities.<sup>14</sup> Several of these differences in MPL and FMLA include: MPL’s applicability extending to all Minnesota employers, regardless of size;

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*U.S. Lags on Paid Leave*, N.Y. TIMES (June 22, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/upshot/paid-leave-democrats.html>.

<sup>8</sup> *DEED Discuss Paid Leave One Month from Launch*, MN EMP. & ECON. DEV. (Dec. 2, 2025), <https://mn.gov/deed/newscenter/press-releases/?id=1045-714985>.

<sup>9</sup> *Paid Family and Medical Leave*, supra note 6.

<sup>10</sup> Alex Derosier, *What New Jan. 1 Laws Mean for MN Workers, Immigrants, Hunters and More*, YAHOO (Dec. 28, 2025), <https://www.yahoo.com/news/articles/jan-1-laws-mean-mn-112100231.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Minnesota Paid Leave, <https://pl.mn.gov/> (last visited Dec. 30, 2025).

<sup>12</sup> Michelle Griffith, *Minnesota Paid Leave Launches in One Month. Here’s What You Need to Know*, MINN. REFORMER (Dec. 1, 2025), <https://minnesotareformer.com/2025/12/01/minnesota-paid-leave-launches-in-one-month-heres-what-you-need-to-know/>.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> *Minnesota Paid Leave Law Set to Take Effect January 1, 2026*, LATHROP GPM (Nov. 5, 2025), <https://www.lathropgpm.com/insights/minnesota-paid-leave-law-set-to-take-effect-january-1-2026/#:>

partial wage replacement during leave for employees; and expansion of covered family members to include more than just spouses, parents, and children.<sup>15</sup> FMLA, unlike MPL, only applies to businesses with over fifty employees.<sup>16</sup> MPL provides paid leave for all employees, even offering an option for self-employers to opt into the program.<sup>17</sup>

MPL was created following successes of other state implemented social insurance programs, including those in California, New York, Washington, and Massachusetts.<sup>18</sup> Paid leave programs have been characterized as being harmful to small businesses however, small businesses reported increased positive or neutral outcomes as compared to large businesses.<sup>19</sup>

MPL will improve inequities that were previously unaddressed through FMLA, such as providing coverage for all workers regardless of the size of their employer. However, MPL will particularly benefit small companies, who would otherwise lack the resources to allow for employees to take sufficient paid leave. Furthermore, the MPL will benefit these small employers by allowing the employers themselves, if self-employed, to take paid leave, and it will benefit small employers by providing them the resources to offer paid leave for employees that it would otherwise not be able to offer. This in turn, will allow for locally owned small businesses to recruit and retain talent, allowing them to compete with larger companies.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, the MPL will benefit women in Minnesota, as 48% of Minnesota's workforce is made up of women, with 27% of business owners being women.<sup>21</sup> Despite approximately half of Minnesota's workforce being

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<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> *Family and Medical Leave (FMLA)*, U.S. DEP'T OF LAB., <https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/benefits-leave/fmla> (last visited Jan. 9, 2026).

<sup>17</sup> *How Paid Leave Works*, MINN. PAID LEAVE, <https://pl.mn.gov/individuals/how-paid-leave-works#> (last visited Jan. 9, 2026).

<sup>18</sup> *Paid Leave Works: Evidence from State Programs*, NAT'L P'SHIP FOR WOMEN & FAMILIES (Nov. 2023), <https://nationalpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/paid-leave-works-evidence-from-state-programs.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> *Paid Leave Means a Stronger Minnesota*, NAT'L P'SHIP FOR WOMEN & FAMILIES (Feb. 2025), <https://nationalpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/paid-leave-means-a-stronger-minnesota.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

made up of women, 59.2% of caregivers in Minnesota are women.<sup>22</sup> MPL, will help to reduce lost wages and work for women who take on caregiving responsibilities by providing more sufficient paid leave than FMLA. Furthermore, MPL’s expansive definition of family is more inclusive for LGBT+ individuals who may not have “traditional” family structures and, in turn, “traditional” caregiving duties.<sup>23</sup>

Though MPL is new to Minnesota, paid leave programs that act as social insurance are not. MPL will likely reduce inequities for those who would otherwise be forced to lose their wages or even jobs due to circumstances that are out of their control. MPL will improve access to paid leave, which will now be available to all Minnesotans regardless of where they work, who employs them, or what their income level may be. MPL will allow Minnesotans to take leave to care for themselves and their loved ones.

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<sup>22</sup> *Caregivers in Minnesota Experience Higher Cardiovascular Disease Risk Due to Stress and Coping*, MINN. DEP’T OF HEALTH (Jan. 2025), <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/cardiovascular/documents/datastory2.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> Amie Stager, *How Minnesota’s New Paid Family and Medical Leave Protects LGBTQ+ Working Families*, WORKDAY MAG. (May 24, 2023), <https://workdaymagazine.org/pfml-protects-lgtbq-families/>.