
SENATE BILL 5531

State of Washington

65th Legislature

2017 Regular Session

By Senators Baumgartner, Wilson, Rossi, Braun, and Angel

Read first time 01/27/17. Referred to Committee on Commerce, Labor & Sports.

1 AN ACT Relating to providing reasonable accommodations in the
2 workplace for pregnant women; and adding a new section to chapter
3 43.10 RCW.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 43.10
6 RCW to read as follows:

7 (1) An employer must provide reasonable accommodations to an
8 employee for a pregnancy-related or childbirth-related health
9 condition if so requested, with written certification from a licensed
10 health care provider, unless the employer demonstrates that the
11 accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the
12 employer's business. The employee must provide written notice to the
13 employer stating that a health condition related to pregnancy or
14 childbirth requires accommodation.

15 (2) Notwithstanding subsection (1) of this section, an employee
16 who is pregnant or has a health condition related to pregnancy or
17 childbirth shall not be required to obtain the advice of a licensed
18 health care provider, nor may an employer claim undue hardship, for
19 the following accommodations: (a) More frequent, longer, or flexible
20 restroom, food, and water breaks; (b) seating; and (c) limits on
21 lifting over twenty pounds.

1 (3) The employee and employer shall engage in an interactive
2 process with respect to an employee's request for a reasonable
3 accommodation. To assist in this process, the department shall post
4 information in a printable format, such as a brochure, explaining the
5 respective rights and responsibilities of the employer and the
6 employee who has a health condition related to pregnancy or
7 childbirth. Additionally, the department shall include information in
8 the "Your Rights as a Worker" poster, or similar required workplace
9 poster, regarding these respective rights and responsibilities.

10 (4) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, an
11 employer shall not be required to create a new or additional position
12 in order to accommodate an employee pursuant to this section, and
13 shall not be required to discharge any employee, transfer any other
14 employee with greater seniority, or promote any employee.

15 (5) An employer shall not require an employee who has a
16 pregnancy-related or childbirth-related health condition to accept an
17 accommodation, if such accommodation is unnecessary to enable the
18 employee to perform the job.

19 (6) An employer shall not:

20 (a) Take adverse action against an employee who requests or uses
21 an accommodation under this section that affects the terms,
22 conditions, or privileges of employment;

23 (b) Deny employment opportunities to an otherwise qualified
24 employee if such denial is based on the employer's need to make
25 reasonable accommodation required by this section; or

26 (c) Require an employee to take leave if another reasonable
27 accommodation can be provided for the employee's pregnancy-related or
28 childbirth-related health condition.

29 (7) This section does not preempt, limit, diminish, or otherwise
30 affect any other provision of law relating to sex discrimination or
31 pregnancy, or in any way diminish or limit the coverage for
32 pregnancy, childbirth, or a pregnancy-related health condition.

33 (8) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this
34 section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

35 (a) "Department" means the department of labor and industries.

36 (b) "Director" means the director of labor and industries.

37 (c) "Employee" means an individual employed by an employer.

38 (d) "Employer" means a person engaged in an industry who has
39 fifteen or more employees for each working day in each of twenty or
40 more calendar weeks in the current or preceding calendar year, except

1 that this section does not apply to an entity that is exempt from
2 federal taxation under 26 U.S.C., Sec. 501(c).

3 (e) "Reasonable accommodation" means:

4 (i) Making existing facilities used by employees readily
5 accessible to and usable by employees who have a pregnancy-related or
6 childbirth-related disability;

7 (ii) Job restructuring, part-time or modified work schedules,
8 reassignment to a vacant position, acquisition or modification of
9 equipment or devices, or appropriate adjustment or modifications of
10 examinations;

11 (iii) Temporary transfer to a less strenuous or hazardous
12 position;

13 (iv) Limits on heavy lifting; and

14 (v) Scheduling flexibility for prenatal visits.

15 (f) "Undue hardship" means an action requiring significant
16 difficulty or expense.

17 (9) The attorney general shall investigate complaints and enforce
18 this section. In addition to the complaint process with the attorney
19 general, any aggrieved person injured by any act in violation of this
20 section has a civil cause of action in court to enjoin further
21 violations, or to recover the actual damages sustained by the person,
22 or both, together with the cost of suit including reasonable
23 attorneys' fees or any other appropriate remedy authorized by state
24 or federal law.

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