

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2044

As Passed House:
June 28, 2013

Title: An act relating to delaying the implementation of the family leave insurance program until funding and payment of benefits are authorized in law.

Brief Description: Delaying the implementation of the family leave insurance program until funding and payment of benefits are authorized in law.

Sponsors: Representatives Hunter and Sullivan.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 4/22/13, 4/23/13 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 4/25/13, 67-29.

Second Special Session

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 6/28/13, 70-19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Delays the payment of family leave insurance benefits until the Legislature appropriates funding and enacts an implementation date.
- Delays the due dates of annual reports to the Legislature on the family leave insurance program until one year after the enacted implementation date of benefits.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Hunter, Chair; Ormsby, Vice Chair; Carlyle, Cody, Dunshee, Green, Haigh, Hunt, Jinkins, Kagi, Maxwell, Morrell, Parker, Pedersen, Pettigrew, Seaquist, Springer and Sullivan.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Wilcox,

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Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buys, Dahlquist, Fagan, Haler, Harris, Hudgins, Pike, Ross, Schmick and Taylor.

Staff: Mary Mulholland (786-7391).

Background:

In 2007 the Legislature enacted Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 5659, which established a framework for a family leave insurance program. The Legislature delayed implementation of the family leave insurance program in 2009 and 2011.

Beginning October 1, 2015, the family leave insurance program would provide benefits of up to \$250 per week for up to five weeks to eligible employees who are unable to perform their regular or customary work due to the birth of a child or to care for a newly adopted child.

Beginning on September 1, 2016, the agency administering the program must report annually to the Legislature on program participation, premium rates, fund balances, and outreach efforts.

Summary of Bill:

The October 1, 2015, implementation date for family leave insurance benefits is removed. Family leave insurance benefits will become payable when the Legislature has specifically appropriated funding and enacted an implementation date.

The September 1, 2016, effective date for annual reports to the Legislature is removed. The administering agency will begin submitting annual reports to the Legislature one year after the enacted implementation date of benefits.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) None.

(Neutral) Since the onset of the economic recession, the Washington Work and Family Coalition reluctantly supported delaying implementation of the family leave insurance program. The need for family leave among Washington residents has increased over the past few years: 300,000 babies have been born in Washington since October 2009. Every one of these babies deserves to begin life with the advantage of loving care from their parents. No parent should be forced to choose between nurturing his or her newborn child and keeping a roof over the family.

Investing in children through the family leave insurance program will ultimately save the state money by improving education and health outcomes and bolstering the state economy. Delaying the family leave insurance program has diminished the health and economic security of small business owners and families. The fiscally responsible approach is to fund full family and medical leave insurance in future state budgets.

(Opposed) There was no money to implement the family leave insurance program when it was enacted by the Legislature in 2007, and there is no money now. There is no funding mechanism, and technically, there is no state agency statutorily directed to implement the program even if funding becomes available. The Appropriations Committee should end the empty promise of family leave and repeal the program.

Persons Testifying: (Neutral) Marilyn Watkins, Economic Opportunity Institute.

(Opposed) Patrick Connor, National Federation of Independent Business.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.