

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA
ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH LEGISLATURE
FIRST SESSION

LEGISLATIVE BILL 258

Introduced by Vargas, 7.

Read first time January 11, 2021

Committee: Business and Labor

- 1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to labor; to adopt the Healthy and Safe
- 2 Families and Workplaces Act; and to provide severability.
- 3 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1 Section 1. Sections 1 to 9 of this act shall be known and may be
2 cited as the Healthy and Safe Families and Workplaces Act.

3 Sec. 2. For purposes of the Healthy and Safe Families and
4 Workplaces Act:

5 (1) Commissioner means the Commissioner of Labor;

6 (2) Department means the Department of Labor;

7 (3) Domestic abuse means any behavior within an intimate
8 relationship that causes physical, psychological, or emotional harm to
9 those in the relationship, including behavior that causes the employee
10 fear or concern for the employee's own safety or the safety of someone
11 close to the employee or behavior done with the intent to harm or exert
12 control over the employee;

13 (4) Domestic assault means domestic assault in the first, second, or
14 third degree under section 28-323 or any similar crime committed in
15 another state;

16 (5) Employee means any individual employed by an employer who
17 receives compensation from such employer and includes recipients of
18 public benefits who are engaged in work activity as a condition of
19 receiving public assistance. Employee includes both full-time and part-
20 time employees. Employee does not include a minor child employed by a
21 parent.

22 (6) Employer includes any individual, partnership, limited liability
23 company, association, corporation, business trust, legal representative,
24 or any organized group of persons employing four or more employees at any
25 one time, excluding any employees who work no more than twenty weeks in
26 any calendar year, but does not include the United States, the State of
27 Nebraska, or any political subdivision thereof;

28 (7) Family member means:

29 (a) A biological, adopted, or foster child, a stepchild, or a legal
30 ward of an employee or the employee's spouse or domestic partner
31 regardless of the age or dependency status of such child, stepchild, or

1 legal ward;

2 (b) A person to whom the employee or the employee's spouse or
3 domestic partner stood in loco parentis when such person was a minor
4 child, regardless of the age or dependency status of person;

5 (c) A biological, adoptive, or foster parent, a stepparent, or a
6 legal guardian of an employee or the employee's spouse or domestic
7 partner

8 (d) A person who stood in loco parentis to the employee or the
9 employee's spouse or domestic partner when the employee or the employee's
10 spouse or domestic partner was a minor child;

11 (e) An employee's spouse or domestic partner; or

12 (f) A grandparent, grandchild, or sibling, whether of a biological,
13 foster, adoptive, or step relationship, of the employee or the employee's
14 spouse or domestic partner;

15 (8) Health care professional means any person licensed under federal
16 or state law to provide medical or emergency services, including, but not
17 limited to, doctors, nurses, and emergency room personnel;

18 (9) Paid sick and safe time means time that is compensated at the
19 same hourly rate and with the same benefits, including health care
20 benefits, as the employee normally earns during hours worked and is
21 provided by an employer to an employee for the purposes described in
22 section 4 of this act, but in no case shall the hourly wage be less than
23 that provided under the Wage and Hour Act;

24 (10) Sexual assault means sexual assault under section 28-319 or
25 28-320, sexual assault of a child under section 28-319.01 or 28-320.01,
26 sexual assault by use of an electronic communication device under section
27 28-320.02, or any similar crime committed in another state; and

28 (11) Stalking means stalking under section 28-311.03 or any similar
29 crime committed in another state.

30 Sec. 3. (1) Employees shall accrue a minimum of one hour of paid
31 sick and safe time for every thirty hours worked. Employees shall not

1 accrue more than forty hours of paid sick and safe time in a calendar
2 year unless the employer selects a higher limit.

3 (2) Employees who are exempt from overtime requirements under 29
4 U.S.C. 213(a)(1) shall be assumed to work forty hours in each work week
5 for purposes of paid sick and safe time accrual unless their normal work
6 week is less than forty hours, in which case paid sick and safe time
7 accrues based upon that normal work week.

8 (3) Paid sick and safe time accrual shall begin at the commencement
9 of employment.

10 (4) Employees shall be entitled to use accrued paid sick and safe
11 time beginning on the sixtieth calendar day following commencement of
12 employment. After the sixtieth calendar day, employees may use paid sick
13 and safe time as it is accrued.

14 (5) Paid sick and safe time shall be carried over to subsequent
15 calendar years, except that an employee's use of paid sick and safe time
16 in each calendar year shall not exceed forty hours unless the employer
17 selects a higher limit.

18 (6) Any employer with a paid leave policy, such as a paid time off
19 policy, which makes available an amount of paid leave which is sufficient
20 to meet the accrual requirements for paid sick and safe time under this
21 section and which may be used for the same purposes and under the same
22 conditions as paid sick and safe time under the Healthy and Safe Families
23 and Workplaces Act is not required to provide additional paid sick and
24 safe time.

25 (7) Nothing in this section shall be construed as requiring
26 financial or other reimbursement to an employee from an employer upon the
27 employee's termination, resignation, retirement, or other separation from
28 employment for accrued paid sick and safe time that has not been used.

29 (8) If an employee is transferred to a separate division, entity, or
30 location, but remains employed by the same employer, the employee shall
31 be entitled to all paid sick and safe time accrued at the prior division,

1 entity, or location and is entitled to use all paid sick and safe time as
2 provided in this section. When there is a separation from employment and
3 the employee is rehired within six months after separation by the same
4 employer, previously accrued paid sick and safe time that had not been
5 used shall be reinstated, and the employee shall be entitled to use
6 accrued paid sick and safe time and accrue additional paid sick and safe
7 time at the recommencement of employment.

8 (9) At its discretion, an employer may loan paid sick and safe time
9 to an employee in advance of accrual by such employee.

10 Sec. 4. (1) An employer shall allow an employee to use paid sick
11 and safe time for:

12 (a) An employee's mental or physical illness, injury, or health
13 condition; an employee's need for medical diagnosis, care, or treatment
14 of a mental or physical illness, injury, or health condition; or an
15 employee's need for preventive medical care;

16 (b) Care of a family member with a mental or physical illness,
17 injury, or health condition; care of a family member who needs medical
18 diagnosis, care, or treatment of a mental or physical illness, injury, or
19 health condition; or care of a family member who needs preventive medical
20 care; or

21 (c) Absence necessary due to domestic abuse, domestic assault,
22 sexual assault, or stalking, regardless of whether a charge has been
23 filed or a conviction has been obtained, if the leave is to allow the
24 employee to obtain any of the following for the employee or the
25 employee's family member:

26 (i) Medical attention needed to recover from physical or
27 psychological injury or disability caused by such domestic abuse,
28 domestic assault, sexual assault, or stalking;

29 (ii) Services from a victim services organization;

30 (iii) Psychological or other counseling;

31 (iv) Relocation due to the domestic abuse, domestic assault, sexual

1 assault, or stalking; or

2 (v) Legal services, including preparing for or participating in any
3 civil or criminal legal proceeding relating to or resulting from the
4 domestic abuse, domestic assault, sexual assault, or stalking.

5 (2) Paid sick and safe time shall be provided upon the oral request
6 of an employee as soon as practicable after the employee is aware of the
7 need for such paid sick and safe time. The request shall include the
8 expected duration of the absence, if reasonably possible.

9 (3) An employer cannot require, as a condition of an employee's
10 taking paid sick and safe time, that the employee search for or find a
11 replacement worker to cover the hours during which the employee is on
12 paid sick and safe time.

13 (4) Accrued paid sick and safe time may be used in the smaller of
14 hourly increments or the smallest increment that the employer's payroll
15 system uses to account for absences or use of other time.

16 (5)(a) If the use of paid sick and safe time exceeds more than three
17 consecutive workdays, an employer may require reasonable documentation
18 that the paid sick and safe time has been used for a purpose described in
19 subsection (1) of this section.

20 (b) Documentation signed by a health care professional indicating
21 that sick time is necessary shall be considered reasonable documentation.

22 (c) The following documentation shall be considered reasonable
23 documentation for absences due to domestic abuse, domestic assault,
24 sexual assault, or stalking:

25 (i) A police report indicating that the employee or the employee's
26 family member was a victim of domestic abuse, domestic assault, sexual
27 assault, or stalking;

28 (ii) A court order protecting or separating the employee or the
29 employee's family member from the perpetrator of an act of domestic
30 abuse, domestic assault, sexual assault, or stalking or other evidence
31 from the court or prosecuting attorney that the employee or the

1 employee's family member has appeared in court or is scheduled to appear
2 in court in a proceeding related to the domestic abuse, domestic assault,
3 sexual assault, or stalking; or

4 (iii) Other documentation signed by an advocate as defined in
5 section 29-4302, an attorney, a police officer, a licensed mental health
6 professional, a medical professional, a social worker, an antiviolence
7 counselor, or a member of the clergy affirming that the employee or the
8 employee's family member is a victim of domestic abuse, domestic assault,
9 sexual assault, or stalking.

10 (d) The employee may choose the type of applicable documentation to
11 submit and the employer shall not require more than one type of
12 reasonable documentation for the same incident.

13 (e) An employer shall not require that the documentation explain the
14 nature of the illness or the details of the domestic abuse, domestic
15 assault, sexual assault, or stalking.

16 (f) If required by the employer, the employee shall provide such
17 reasonable documentation to the employer no later than thirty days after
18 the first day of the period of time for which the employee is requesting
19 paid sick and safe time. The employer shall not delay the commencement of
20 paid sick and safe time on the basis that the employer has not yet
21 received the documentation.

22 (6) Any information provided to an employer regarding paid sick and
23 safe time shall be confidential except to the extent that any disclosure
24 of such information is:

25 (a) Requested or consented to in writing by the employee;

26 (b) Otherwise required by federal or state law; or

27 (c) Necessary to prevent a clear and definite danger to other
28 employees.

29 Sec. 5. (1) It shall be unlawful for an employer or any other
30 person to interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of, or the
31 attempt to exercise, any right protected under the Healthy and Safe

1 Families and Workplaces Act.

2 (2) An employer shall not take retaliatory personnel action or
3 discriminate against an employee because the employee has exercised
4 rights protected under the act. Such rights include, but are not limited
5 to, the right to use paid sick and safe time pursuant to the act, the
6 right to file a complaint or inform any person about any employer's
7 alleged violation of the act, the right to cooperate with the department
8 in its investigations of alleged violations of the act, and the right to
9 inform any person of potential rights under the act.

10 (3) It is unlawful for an employer's absence control policy to count
11 paid sick and safe time taken under the act as an absence that may lead
12 to or result in discipline, discharge, demotion, suspension, or any other
13 adverse action.

14 (4) The protections of this section shall apply to any person who
15 mistakenly but in good faith alleges violations of the act.

16 Sec. 6. Employers shall give notice at the time of hire that
17 employees are entitled to paid sick and safe time, the amount of paid
18 sick and safe time, the terms of use for paid sick and safe time
19 guaranteed under the Healthy and Safe Families and Workplaces Act, that
20 retaliation against employees who request or use paid sick and safe time
21 is prohibited, and that each employee has the right to file a complaint
22 or bring a civil action if paid sick and safe time is denied by the
23 employer or the employee is retaliated against for exercising rights
24 under the act.

25 Sec. 7. (1) An employee or other person may report to the
26 commissioner any suspected violation of the Healthy and Safe Families and
27 Workplaces Act. The commissioner shall encourage reporting pursuant to
28 this subsection by keeping confidential, to the maximum extent permitted
29 by applicable law, the name and other identifying information of the
30 employee or person reporting the suspected violation, except that with
31 the authorization of such person, the commissioner may disclose the

1 person's name and identifying information as necessary to enforce the act
2 or for other appropriate purposes. The commissioner may summon witnesses
3 and require the production of records, books, and documents for
4 examination in any investigation conducted by the department pursuant to
5 this section. The commissioner shall assess an administrative penalty
6 against an employer when an investigation reveals that the employer
7 violated the act. The administrative penalty shall be not more than five
8 hundred dollars in the case of a first violation and not more than five
9 thousand dollars in the case of a second or subsequent violation. The
10 commissioner shall notify the employer of the proposed administrative
11 penalty by certified mail or any other manner of delivery by which the
12 United States Postal Service can verify delivery. The employer shall have
13 fifteen working days after the date the commissioner sends notification
14 of the penalty to contest such penalty. Notice of contest shall be sent
15 to the commissioner who shall provide a hearing in accordance with the
16 Administrative Procedure Act.

17 (2) Any person aggrieved by a violation of the Health and Safe
18 Families and Workplaces Act or any entity, a member of which is aggrieved
19 by a violation of the act, may bring a civil action in a court of
20 competent jurisdiction against an employer who violates the act. The
21 action may be brought without first filing an administrative complaint.
22 Upon prevailing in an action brought pursuant to this subsection, an
23 aggrieved person shall recover:

24 (a) The full amount of any unpaid sick and safe time; and

25 (b) Attorney's fees and costs associated with the action.

26 Sec. 8. (1) Nothing in the Healthy and Safe Families and Workplaces
27 Act shall be construed to discourage or prohibit an employer from the
28 adoption or retention of a paid sick and safe time policy that is more
29 generous than the policy required by the act.

30 (2) The act provides minimum requirements pertaining to paid sick
31 and safe time and shall not be construed to preempt, limit, or otherwise

1 affect the applicability of any other law, rule, regulation, requirement,
2 policy, contract, or standard that provides for greater accrual or use by
3 employees of sick and safe time, whether paid or unpaid, or that extends
4 other protections to employees.

5 Sec. 9. The department shall administer and enforce the Healthy and
6 Safe Families and Workplaces Act and may adopt and promulgate rules and
7 regulations to carry out the purposes of the act.

8 Sec. 10. If any section in this act or any part of any section is
9 declared invalid or unconstitutional, the declaration shall not affect
10 the validity or constitutionality of the remaining portions.