



## **NEWS:**

# **Bill Seeks to Grant Paid Parental Leave to State, Public School Employees**

**June 15, 2018** -- State and public school employees will get 12 weeks of paid parental leave if a bill that cleared the House of Representatives this week is enacted.

On a vote of 27-to-13 (with one absent), the lower chamber approved [House Bill 3](#) Tuesday evening.

The proposed benefit, advocated by Gov. John Carney, could be used by both parents upon the birth of a child or the adoption of a child, six years of age or younger.

According to a fiscal note by the Office of the Controller General, the proposal would initially cost taxpayers more than \$5.1 million annually, with local school districts picking up about a quarter of the cost.

Advocates maintain the benefit would be a potent tool for recruiting and retaining employees. They also claim allowing parents to spend three months with their new children will enhance pediatric health and build stronger family bonds.

While not opposing the concept of parental leave, those voting against the bill said Delaware's benefit would be the most generous in the nation.

"New York [State] is considered to have one of the best family medical leave acts and it started in January of this year," said State Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown. "Their 12-weeks of paid leave is 50-percent of the employee's weekly income and the law requires an employee payroll deduction to fund the benefit."

By contrast, Delaware employees would not be required to help finance the benefit; would receive 100 percent of their salary while on leave, and could claim the leave after only one year on the job. Additionally, employees would have up to 12 months from the date of the birth or the adoption to utilize the benefit.

Rep. Briggs King unsuccessfully tried to amend the bill to reduce the benefit from 12 weeks to four weeks. Since many state workers already use leave time to cover the birth of their children, Rep. Briggs King said her amendment would still have provided significant help to new parents, while being more responsible to taxpayers.

State Rep. Rich Collins, R-Millsboro, worries about the bill's impact on public education, saying that he believes excusing teachers for three months during the school year would shortchange students and leave administrators scrambling to find capable replacements.

"Twelve weeks is one-third of a 180-day school year," Rep. Collins said during the debate on the measure. "We had superintendents in Sussex County tell us just a week or two ago that there are zero qualified math substitutes that they can find."

If enacted, the benefit would take effect starting next April.

House Bill 3 is now pending consideration in the Senate Elections & Government Affairs Committee. If it is ultimately approved by the chamber, the governor will sign it into law.