



Dear Chair Baker, Ranking Member Pinto, and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and Minnesota Inter County Association (MICA), we wanted to provide input on HF 1976. Particularly, we are grateful for Representative Baker's considerations of county and local government concerns which are reflected in the A1 author's amendment.

Counties are supportive of paid leave benefits for employees. These benefits can provide stability for employers and employees, making the county a more attractive work environment while allowing the employee flexibility in times of need. In fact, local governments have historically been some of the earliest adopters of paid leave policies. Most local public employers have long provided collectively-bargained paid leave, extended leave, and the opportunity to carry forward substantial leave balances that can be used for various purposes, including for extended periods of illness and recovery.

The new Minnesota Paid Leave law falls outside this collective bargaining process, and is in addition to what we already provide, giving public employers no flexibility to adjust duplicative benefits. Instead, the law layers the new leave benefits on top of existing benefits adding complexities, leave duration growth, and general costs to the public due to the higher property tax levies necessary to support this work.

Counties are looking to adjust the paid leave law to address logistical administrative issues that the current law creates. The A1 amendment on lines 1.3-1.4 states that the premium rate must be split evenly between employers and employees. This reflects a common approach for these types of benefits in other states and ensures that neither employers nor employees would have to cover more than 50% of the premium. This committee heard from DEED and additional stakeholders earlier this year that the current law is not clear on the issue.

The A1 amendment on line 1.6 clarifies that elected officials would be excluded from the program. This same wording is used to exclude elected officials from Earned Sick and Safe Time under current law. Per Minn. Stat. § 43A.17, subdivision 10, benefits for local elected officials are set by local compensation resolutions. Not amending the Paid Leave definition to address this conflict will result in Paid Leave premiums being paid even though local elected officials cannot access the benefits.

Another issue is the lesser-known opportunity in the current law is for someone to take 12 weeks of Paid Leave for parental/bonding and then to add on an additional 12 weeks of unpaid Pregnancy and Parental Leave (an already existing Minnesota Law). Similar to FMLA, we do not believe an employee should be able to "stack" these programs, which could result in a combined 24-32 weeks of total protected leave time each year if circumstances are met.

These proposals adhere to the important principal of providing paid leave to employees while also recognizing tax burdens, reasonable limitations and requests for clarity that will help public employers responsibly administer this new law. We appreciate Rep. Baker and the committee considering our unique concerns and are eager to work with legislators to address these issues as session moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nathan Jesson'.

Nathan Jesson
Minnesota Inter-County Association



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Hilgart', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matt Hilgart
Association of Minnesota Counties