

News Release

Pueblo Board Of County Commissioners



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PUEBLO COUNTY SPEARHEADS BROAD PAID PARENTAL LEAVE TREND

PUEBLO – Pueblo County is spearheading paid parental leave policy ahead of most municipal governments and private employers nationwide.

On Wednesday, June 28, the Pueblo Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) adopted a paid parental leave policy that allows eligible employees to receive a maximum of four weeks, to be used within a four-month period, of paid-time off for the birth, adoption or placement of a child/children in foster care. The policy is not just exclusive to mothers. Pueblo County's new paid parental leave policy includes father's, same-sex couples, adoptive and foster parents as well as extended family that find themselves taking care of newborns placed in their care.

Based on a 10-county survey conducted by Pueblo County, only Boulder County had a similar policy. However, Boulder Counties policy was not as broad, exclusive to mothers and maternity leave only.

"I didn't want to leave out fathers, same-sex couples, adoptive and foster parents, or extended family members who suddenly find themselves raising a new baby. While starting a family most frequently affects the younger generations, social issues are affecting older generations, making grandparents, aunts and uncles the primary care giver for young children," Commissioner Garrison Ortiz said.

Pueblo County did not have any paid parental leave policies prior to the adoption of this policy. Prior to this policy, only eligible mothers could take up to 12 weeks of unpaid FMLA leave following the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a newborn.

"When I first came on board, I was touring our buildings and visiting with employees. One department had five expectant mothers, most who were new employees who did not enough paid-time off available to have the adequate time to stay home and form a bond with their new baby. That visit is what started me on my journey towards adopting this visionary policy," Commissioner Ortiz said.

The paid parental leave policy is one of the several ways the BOCC provides additional benefits to County employees with no additional cost to taxpayers.

“I truly believe that our employees are our greatest assets and I’m tired of hearing about losing quality employees to employers that offer higher salaries. My hope is that this policy will help us to first and foremost take better care of our employees, but also to give us a more robust benefits package that will provide more competition with those employers offering higher salaries.”

Some of those no-cost employee benefits include:

- Employer health plan premium contributions
- Some of the lowest health-plan premium increases in the state
- A cafeteria-style health plan marketplace
- 13 holidays
- Releasing employees early prior to long holiday weekends to allow for more family time
- Paid sick leave banking and sick leave donations

“This policy does not have a financial price tag, but more importantly the time spent at home forming a new bond with a child is priceless,” Commissioner Ortiz said.

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