

ARTICLE XIII. EARNED SICK AND SAFE LEAVE.

Sec. 27-76. Findings and Definitions.

(a) *Findings.*

- (1) Many persons employed in the County do not receive earned sick and safe leave.
- (2) The absence of earned sick and safe leave often results in the unnecessary spread of disease in the County when:
 - (A) an employee without earned sick and safe leave is forced to work while ill; or
 - (B) a parent without earned sick and safe leave is forced to send a sick child to day care or school.
- (3) Minimum standards for earned sick and safe leave in the County are necessary to:
 - (A) promote the health and welfare of County residents;
 - (B) safeguard employers and employees against unfair competition;
 - (C) increase the stability of industry in the County; and
 - (D) decrease the need for the County to spend public money for the relief of employees who also live in the County.

(b) *Definitions.* As used in this Article:

Abuse has the meaning defined in Section 4-501 of the Family Law Article of the Maryland Code, as amended.

Director means the Executive Director of the Office of Human Rights and includes the Executive Director's designee.

Domestic violence means abuse against a person eligible for relief.

Earned sick and safe leave means paid leave away from work that is provided by an employer under § 27-77 and can be used for the purposes

described in § 27-79. Earned sick and safe leave includes paid time off that can be used by the employee for any purpose.

Employ means to engage a person to work for compensation.

Employee means any person permitted or instructed to work or be present by an employer in the County, including a domestic worker as defined in Section 11-4B(b). Employee does not include:

- (1) an individual who:
 - (A) does not have a regular work schedule with the employer;
 - (B) contacts the employer for work assignments and is scheduled to work the assignments within 48 hours after contacting the employer;
 - (C) has no obligation to work for the employer if the individual does not contact the employer for work assignments; and
 - (D) is not employed by a temporary placement agency;
- (2) an individual who regularly works 8 hours or less each week; or
- (3) an individual who is an independent contractor.

Employer means any person, individual, proprietorship, partnership, joint venture, corporation, limited liability company, trust, association, or other entity operating and doing business in the County that employs 1 or more persons in the County in addition to the owners. Employer includes the County government, but does not include the United States, any State, or any other local government.

Family member means:

- (1) a biological child, adopted child, foster child, or stepchild of the employee;
- (2) a child for whom the employee has legal or physical custody or guardianship;

- (3) a child for whom the employee is the primary caregiver;
- (4) a biological parent, adoptive parent, foster parent, or stepparent of the employee or the employee's spouse;
- (5) the legal guardian of the employee;
- (6) an individual who served as the primary caregiver of the employee when the employee was a minor;
- (7) the spouse of the employee;
- (8) a grandparent of the employee;
- (9) the spouse of a grandparent of the employee;
- (10) a grandchild of the employee;
- (11) a biological, adopted, or foster sibling of the employee; or
- (12) the spouse of a biological, adopted, or foster sibling of the employee.

Health care provider means an individual licensed under State law to provide medical services.

Person eligible for relief has the meaning stated in Section 4-501 of the Family Law Article of the Maryland Code, as amended.

Sexual assault means:

- (1) rape, sexual offense, or any other act that is a sexual crime under Title 3, Subtitle 3 of the Criminal Law Article of the Maryland Code, as amended;
- (2) child sexual abuse under Section 3-602 of the Criminal Law Article of the Maryland Code, as amended; or
- (3) sexual abuse of a vulnerable adult under Section 3-604 of the Criminal Law Article of the Maryland Code, as amended.

Stalking has the meaning stated in Section 3-802 of the Criminal Law Article of the Maryland Code, as amended.

Tipped employee means an employee who:

- (1) is engaged in an occupation in which the employee customarily and regularly receives more than \$30 each month in tips;
- (2) has been informed by the employer about the provisions of this Section; and
- (3) has kept all of the tips that the employee received.

Sec. 27-77. Earned Sick and Safe Leave Required.

- (a) *Earned sick and safe leave.* An employer must provide each employee earned sick and safe leave for work performed in the County paid at the same rate and with the same benefits as the employee normally earns. A tipped employee must be paid at least the County minimum wage required under Section 27-68 for each hour the employee uses earned sick and safe leave. An employer with fewer than 5 employees must provide each employee with both paid and unpaid sick and safe leave for work performed in the County as required in subsection (c). An employee must accrue paid leave before accruing unpaid leave in a calendar year.
- (b) *Rate of accrual for an employer with 5 or more employees.* The paid earned sick and safe leave provided under subsection (a) must accrue at a rate of at least 1 hour for every 30 hours an employee works in the County, except an employer with 5 or more employees must not be required to allow an employee to:
 - (1) earn more than 56 hours of earned sick and safe leave in a calendar year; or
 - (2) use more than 80 hours of earned sick and safe leave in a calendar year.
- (c) *Rate of accrual for an employer with fewer than 5 employees.* The earned sick and safe leave provided under subsection (a) must accrue at a rate of

at least 1 hour for every 30 hours an employee works in the County, except an employer with fewer than 5 employees must not be required to allow an employee to:

- (1) earn more than 32 hours of paid earned sick and safe leave and 24 hours of unpaid earned sick and safe leave in a calendar year; or
 - (2) use more than 80 hours of earned sick and safe leave in a calendar year.
- (d) *Retaliation prohibited.* A person must not:
- (1) retaliate against any person for:
 - (A) lawfully opposing any violation of this Article; or
 - (B) filing a complaint, testifying, assisting, or participating in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing under this Article; or
 - (2) obstruct or prevent enforcement or compliance with this Article.

Sec. 27-78. Minimum Earned Sick and Safe Leave Standards.

- (a) An employer may award earned sick and safe leave as the leave accrues during the calendar year or may award the full amount that an employee would earn over the entire calendar year at the beginning of a calendar year.
- (b) To calculate the rate of accrual of earned sick and safe leave for an employee who is exempt from the overtime provisions of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act, the employer must assume the employee worked the number of hours worked in a normal workweek up to 40 hours each workweek.
- (c) Unless an employer awards the full amount of earned sick and safe leave that the employee would earn over the entire calendar year at the beginning of a calendar year, an employer must permit an employee to

carry the balance of any unused earned sick and safe leave over to the next calendar year, but an employer must not be required to permit an employee to carry over more than 56 hours of unused earned sick and safe leave.

- (d) If an employee is allowed to use earned sick and safe leave before it has accrued, or if an employee who receives the full amount of earned sick and safe leave at the beginning of the year and uses more than would have been earned up to that time, the employer may deduct the amount paid for the earned sick and safe leave from the wages paid to the employee on the termination of employment if:
 - (1) the employer and employee mutually consented to the deduction as evidenced by a document signed by the employee; and
 - (2) the employee leaves the employment of the employer before the employee has accrued the amount of earned sick and safe leave that was used.
- (e) If an employee is rehired by an employer to work in the County within 9 months after leaving the employment, the employer must reinstate any unused earned sick and safe leave that the employee had when the employee left the employment except for when the employee voluntarily leaves work without good cause as defined in MD. LABOR & EMPL. CODE ANN. § 8-1001.
- (f) An employer may permit an employee to use earned sick and safe leave before the amount needed by the employee accrues.
- (g) An employer must permit an employee to earn sick and safe leave during an initial 90-day probationary period, but may prohibit an employee from using earned sick and safe leave during an initial 90-day probationary period.

- (h) This Article must not be construed to:
 - (1) require an employer to compensate an employee for unused earned sick and safe leave when the employee leaves the employer's employment;
 - (2) prohibit an employer from adopting or retaining a general paid leave policy that meets the minimum requirement of this Article;
or
 - (3) affect a provision of a contract, a collective bargaining agreement, an employee benefit plan, or any other agreement that requires the employer to provide general paid leave benefits that meet the minimum requirements of this Article.

Sec. 27-79. Use of Earned Sick and Safe Leave.

- (a) An employee may use earned sick and safe leave:
 - (1) to care for or treat the employee's mental or physical illness, injury, or condition;
 - (2) to obtain preventive medical care for the employee or the employee's family member;
 - (3) to care for a family member with a mental or physical illness, injury, or condition;
 - (4) if the employer's place of business has closed by order of a public official due to a public health emergency;
 - (5) if the school or child care center for the employee's family member is closed by order of a public official due to a public health emergency;
 - (6) to care for a family member if a health official or health care provider has determined that the family member's presence in the

community would jeopardize the health of others because of the family member's exposure to a communicable disease; or

(7) if the absence from work is due to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking committed against the employee or the employee's family member and the leave is used:

(A) by the employee to obtain for the employee or the employee's family;

(i) medical attention needed to recover from a physical or psychological injury due to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking;

(ii) services from a victim services organization related to the domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking;
or

(iii) legal services, including preparing for or participating in a civil or criminal proceeding related to the domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking;
or

(B) during the time that the employee has temporarily relocated due to the domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

(b) To use earned sick and safe leave, an employee must:

(1) request leave from the employer as soon as practicable after the employee determines that the employee needs to take leave;

(2) notify the employer of the anticipated duration of the leave; and

(3) comply with any reasonable procedures established by the employer when requesting and taking leave.

- (c) An employer must not require an employee who requests earned sick and safe leave to search for or find an individual to take the employee's place while the employee takes leave.
- (d) An employer must not require an employee to:
 - (1) disclose specific details of the mental or physical illness, injury, or condition of the employee or the employee's family member; or
 - (2) provide as certification any information that would violate the Federal Social Security Act or the Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.
- (e) By mutual consent of the employee and the employer, the employee may work additional hours or trade shifts with another employee during a pay period to make up the amount of work hours that the employee missed for which the employee could have used earned sick and safe leave.
- (f) An employee may take earned sick and safe leave in the smallest increment that the employer's payroll system uses to account for absences or work time, except that an employee must not be required to take earned sick and safe leave in an increment of more than 4 hours.
- (g) An employer must provide an employee with a written statement of available earned sick and safe leave each time the employer pays wages to the employee. An employer may satisfy this requirement through an online system where the employee can access their own earned sick and safe leave balances.
- (h) An employer may require an employee who uses more than 3 consecutive days of earned sick and safe leave to provide reasonable documentation to verify that the leave was used appropriately.

Sec. 27-80. Notice.

- (a) An employer must notify the employees that they are entitled to earned sick and safe leave under this Article.
- (b) The notice must include:
 - (1) a statement of how earned sick and safe leave is accrued;
 - (2) the permitted uses of earned sick and safe leave;
 - (3) a statement that the employer must not retaliate against an employee for exercising the rights granted by this Article; and
 - (4) information about the employee's right to file a complaint with the Director for a violation of any rights granted by this Article.
- (c) The Director must create and publish a model notice in English, Spanish, and any other language that the Director finds is necessary that may be used by an employer to comply with subsection (b).
- (d) An employer may provide notice by:
 - (1) displaying the model notice or another notice containing the same information in a conspicuous and accessible area at each of the employer's work locations in the County;
 - (2) including the model notice or another notice containing the same information in an employee handbook or other written guidance distributed to all employees; or
 - (3) distributing the model notice or another notice containing the same information to each employee when the employee is hired.

Sec. 27-81. Records.

- (a) An employer must keep, for at least 3 years, a record of:
 - (1) earned sick and safe leave accrued by each employee; and
 - (2) earned sick and safe leave used by each employee.

- (b) After giving the employer notice and determining a mutually agreeable time for the inspection, the Director may inspect a record kept under subsection (a) for the purposes of determining whether the employer is complying with this Article.

Sec. 27-82. Enforcement.

- (a) A covered employee who did not receive earned sick and safe leave in violation of this Article may file a complaint with the Director under Section 27-7.
- (b) The County Executive may delegate the authority to enforce this Article to a State agency that is legally authorized to enforce the County earned sick and safe leave requirements.