AITKIN COUNTY
EST 1857

Board of County Commissioners
Agenda Request

2X
Agenda Item #

Requested Meeting Date: October 28, 2025

Title of Item: New Policy - MN Paid Family Leave, effective 1/1/2026

☐ REGULAR AGENDA ☑ CONSENT AGENDA	**Action Requested:** ☑ Approve/Deny Motion ☐ Adopt Resolution (attach draft) ☐ Hold Public Hearing	☐ Direction Requested ☐ Discussion Item ☐ Information Only **provide copy of hearing notice that was published*

Submitted by: Bobbie Danielson, HR Director	**Department:** Human Resources Dept.
Presenter (Name and Title): n/a	**Estimated Time Needed:** n/a

Summary of Issue:

This new policy is being implemented in response to the State of Minnesota's Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) program, which takes effect on January 1, 2026. It outlines the basic provisions of the State program, including employee eligibility, benefit coordination, and how PFML will interact with existing County leave policies. The intent of this policy is to provide a clear framework for administering PFML benefits in alignment with State requirements while ensuring consistent application across the organization.

This PFML policy has been reviewed and discussed by department heads and the personnel committee.

Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:

Recommended Action/Motion:
Motion to approve the new PFML policy, effective 1/1/2026.

Financial Impact:
Is there a cost associated with this request? ☐ *Yes* ☑ *No*
What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? $
Is this budgeted? ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No* *Please Explain:*

Legally binding agreements must have County Attorney approval prior to submission.

Aitkin County Personnel Policy Addendum

Section: Leaves of Absence
Policy Title: Minnesota Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML)
Effective Date: January 1, 2026

I. Purpose

To provide guidance on employee rights and employer responsibilities under the Minnesota Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) Act, effective January 1, 2026, as established by Minn. Stat. Chapter 268B.

II. Policy Overview

Beginning January 1, 2026, all employees, including elected officials, who meet PFML eligibility criteria may apply for paid family or medical leave through the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). PFML provides partial wage replacement and job protection for qualifying leave events.

III. Eligibility

Employees are eligible for PFML if they:

- Worked in Minnesota at least 50% of the prior year or live in Minnesota; and
- Earned at least 5.3% of the statewide average annual wage in the previous year (approx. $3,700 in 2024).

Federal employees and certain hospitality-industry seasonal workers are excluded. Employees must be employed with Aitkin County for at least 90 days to be eligible for job reinstatement protections.

IV. Leave Entitlement

PFML provides:

- Up to **12 weeks** of **medical leave** for the employee's own serious health condition, and
- Up to **12 weeks** of **family leave** for qualifying reasons (bonding, caregiving, safety, active duty-related).

Maximum combined leave: 20 weeks per benefit year. Leave may be taken continuously or intermittently (minimum increment: .001 hours, unless indicated otherwise by departmental recordkeeping systems in the Sheriff's office and/or Highway department).

Intermittent Leave under PFML

Employees may take scheduled intermittent Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) when approved by the state. Intermittent PFML benefits are prorated, meaning the benefit payment will reflect only the portion of time the employee is actually on leave.

Intermittent PFML leave is limited to a maximum of 480 hours per calendar year (equivalent to 12 weeks of full-time leave). Any additional PFML leave beyond 480 hours must be taken as continuous leave, if eligible.

Example: An employee approved for intermittent PFML may take leave in partial-day or partial-week increments, such as one day per week to attend medical appointments. In this case, the employee would receive a partial benefit for each day taken, and the total time used will count toward the 480-hour annual cap.

V. Covered Family Members

Includes spouses/domestic partners, children, parents, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, in-laws, and individuals with close personal relationships meeting PFML criteria.

VI. Interaction with Other Leaves

PFML will **run concurrently** with:

- FMLA (where applicable)
- Minnesota Parental Leave Act
- ESST
- Any other applicable leaves

Employees may elect to use earned paid time off (e.g., PTO, personal leave, comp time, sick leave, ESST) to supplement PFML benefits, but cannot be required to do so. Coordination must not result in wage replacement exceeding the employee's regular wage.

VII. Application Process

Employees must:

1. Notify their supervisor or HR of the need for leave (30 days in advance if foreseeable).
2. Apply directly to DEED for PFML benefits (up to 60 days before the leave start date).
3. Submit any required documentation to DEED for eligibility certification.

The employer's designated PFML administrators (HR Director, HR Specialist, and Payroll Technician) will review and respond to DEED inquiries within 7 calendar days.

VIII. Premiums and Funding

PFML is funded by employer and employee payroll premiums, shared 50/50. Deductions will begin January 1, 2026. Contribution rates are set by the state and may be adjusted annually or as otherwise determined by the state.

IX. Seniority, Job Protection, and Continuation of Benefits

Upon return from PFML, employees are entitled to:

- Reinstatement to the same or equivalent position
- Continuation of group benefits during leave. Employees are responsible for coordinating their share of premium payments with Payroll prior to any planned leave. In situations where advance notice is not possible due to incapacity, the employee (or their representative) must contact Payroll to make payment arrangements as soon as practicable.
- Protection from retaliation or interference in exercising PFML rights
- Bargaining unit employees who are in an unpaid status through the employer shall continue to accrue seniority for up to thirty (30) calendar days during a leave of absence, unless otherwise provided in the collective bargaining agreement.
- Probationary periods will be extended by the length of any leave taken, unless such extension is prohibited by the collective bargaining agreement or law.

X. Notices and Documentation

By December 1, 2025, Aitkin County will provide all employees with the required PFML notice, including contribution information, DEED contact details, and rights under the statute. New employees will receive this notice within 30 days of hire. Employees will be asked to acknowledge receipt in writing.

XI. Administration and Updates

The State of MN in cooperation with the Human Resources Department is responsible for administering PFML compliance. This policy is subject to change based on state guidance or legislative updates. Questions should be directed to Human Resources.