

Law amended to increase parental leave, including raising mandatory paternity leave to 4 weeks

From April 1, 2025, eligible fathers of Singaporean children will be entitled to four weeks of mandatory government-paid paternity leave.

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SINGAPORE - A law was amended on Nov 13 to implement more government-paid parental leave and mandatory paternity leave, which had been announced earlier in August.

Under the amendments to the Child Development Co-Savings Act, [parents-to-be will get another 10 weeks of shared leave](#) on top of their current leave entitlement, bringing the total amount of government-paid parental leave to 30 weeks by April 1, 2026.

From April 1, 2025, eligible fathers of Singaporean children will also be entitled to four weeks of mandatory government-paid paternity leave.

The new shared parental leave scheme will be rolled out in two phases, starting with six weeks from April 1, 2025, and increasing to 10 weeks from April 1, 2026. This shared leave is to be taken within 12 months of the child's birth, and employees must inform employers at least four weeks before going on leave in a continuous block.

Prime Minister Lawrence Wong announced these parental leave enhancements at his National Day Rally speech in August.

Twelve MPs spoke on the amendments at the debate on Nov 13, raising issues such as protections against discrimination for those who take parental leave and concerns of employers about the impact of more leave provisions on their business.

The two extra weeks of voluntary paternity leave currently will also be made mandatory from April 1, 2025, meaning that employers must grant such leave applications.

Those who dismiss or give a notice of dismissal to employees on government-paid paternity leave or adoption leave will be guilty of an offence and be liable on conviction to a fine or jail, or both, said Minister of State for Social and Family Development Sun Xueling.

MPs welcomed the Bill, but noted the need to encourage parents to use their leave entitlements, citing fears of being penalised by companies for doing so.

They called for stronger protections against discrimination for those who take up parental leave, with Ms Mariam Jaafar (Sembawang GRC) suggesting that they could be included in the upcoming workplace fairness legislation.

Citing an NUS study showing that lower-income dads, in particular, are less likely to take paternity leave as they are afraid of losing their jobs, Mr Louis Ng (Nee Soon GRC) said the Government could look into more targeted support for these fathers.

MPs also spoke on the importance of flexible work arrangements to support parents.

NTUC assistant secretary-general Yeo Wan Ling (Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC) said an engagement with 40,000 workers at NTUC's #EveryWorkerMatters Conversations found that 85 per cent of those with caregiving responsibilities cited flexible work as their most preferred form of support. Paid caregiving leave came in second, at 64 per cent.

Mr Melvin Yong (Radin Mas) suggested a universal maternity insurance scheme for all mothers-to-be, including those with pre-existing medical conditions.

In response, Ms Sun said the MediShield Life scheme covers the treatment of serious pregnancy and delivery-related complications, and the Government provides subsidies of up to 80 per cent and allows the use of MediSave for general maternity expenses.

Mr Ng called for maternity and paternity leave to be equalised, to support the mother's recovery after delivery and signal shared childcare responsibilities.

He cited a 2019 Institute of Policy Studies research paper which said family policies in Singapore signal that childcare is a woman's responsibility and reinforce gender stereotypes. "This is a self-reinforcing loop. Because we give fathers less leave, they don't get to develop the skills and confidence needed to care for their kids. This, the IPS Study finds, causes them to leave childcare to mothers."

MPs also said many parents need more support in their children's earlier years, such as additional childcare leave to look after children who often fall ill.

Dr Wan Rizal (Jalan Besar GRC) suggested increasing the number of childcare leave days for parents, for instance, based on the number of children.

The debate also surfaced concerns of employers about the impact of parental leave enhancements on their business, as well as from employees who worry that they will be forced to pick up the slack for colleagues on leave.

Nominated MP Mark Lee highlighted the need for clear guidelines on reimbursement conditions for employers, and defining reasonable causes for deferring leave.

"For instance, if a small business with limited staff cannot immediately accommodate leave without major disruption, would that constitute a reasonable cause for delay, especially if the employee insists on taking it at that time? For sectors with critical peak seasons, such as retail during holidays, could an employer reasonably defer leave if an employee insists on taking it during such high demand times?"

He suggested support measures such as extending paid coverage for returning employees by one to two months to help offset the operational impact.

Mr Lee said: "With thoughtful collaboration between businesses, the Government and employees, this Bill positions Singapore as both a family-friendly and business-friendly society."

Ms Sun said one arrangement could be for employees to take leave more flexibly in weeks, days or half-days over 12 months, to avoid peak periods or manpower shortage.

She said employers can use the wage savings reimbursed by the Government to hire and train temporary workers, recognise the efforts of colleagues covering for the employees on leave, or for handovers and reintegration of staff coming back from parental leave.

“At a generous level of \$2,500 per week, or about \$10,000 per month, this fully covers the wages of the majority of employees on leave,” she said.