



## Paid Family and Medical Leave Advisory Committee

Meeting Details: Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023,  
Time: 1:00pm - 3:00 pm  
Location: Hybrid: Zoom and In-Person  
212 Maple Park Ave SE, Olympia, WA 98501

### Committee members present:

- Justin DeFour, Director ESD Leave & Care
- Edsonya Charles, PFML Ombuds

### Employee Representatives

- Samantha Grad, Teamsters 117
- Maggie Humphreys, Moms Rising
- Joe Kendo, Washington State Labor Council
- Gabriela Quintana, Economic Opportunity Institute

### Employer Representatives

- Christine Brewer, Brewer Public Affairs
- Bob Battles, Association of WA Business
- Julia Gorton, Washington Hospitality Association

### ESD Staff

- John Mattes, Leave and Care Operations Manager
- Alison Eldridge Leave and Care Transformation Manager
- Eve Sheng- Managing Actuary
- Brian Kennedy- Forecast & Economic Analyst
- April Amundson- Leave and Care Policy Manager
- Julie York- Economic Analyst
- Rebecca Grady- Research and Data Manager
- Mike Juhl- Technology Manager
- Amanda Siemandel, Administrative Assistant 5-
- Erika Ayala, Administrative Assistant 4
- Roberta Kowald: Legislative Coordinator PFML

## Meeting Opening and Notes Approval

ESD Leave & Care Director Justin DeFour opened the meeting at 1:01 PM welcoming those in person and those participating by Zoom.

Notes to approve October meeting minutes. (No meeting held in November) Motion to approve by Joe Kendo. Seconded by Julia Gorton

September Minutes Approved. All in favor. None opposed.

Christine Brewer will be leaving the PFML Advisory Committee. Cami Feek ESD Commissioner, Advisory members and ESD staff thanked her for her service.

## Program and Fiscal Updates

### Brian Kennedy, Forecast & Economic Analyst

#### Claim Applications Submitted by Type

- November 2023, we received 22,660 applications – 4<sup>th</sup> highest to date.
  - 6% less than last month
  - 18% more than November of last year
- Continue to see shift towards medical leave types (44% family, 56% medical)
- Three-month rolling average ~ 22K claim applications.
- We've seen an average 15% growth rate throughout the year.

#### Approval Rate and Monthly Claims with Payments

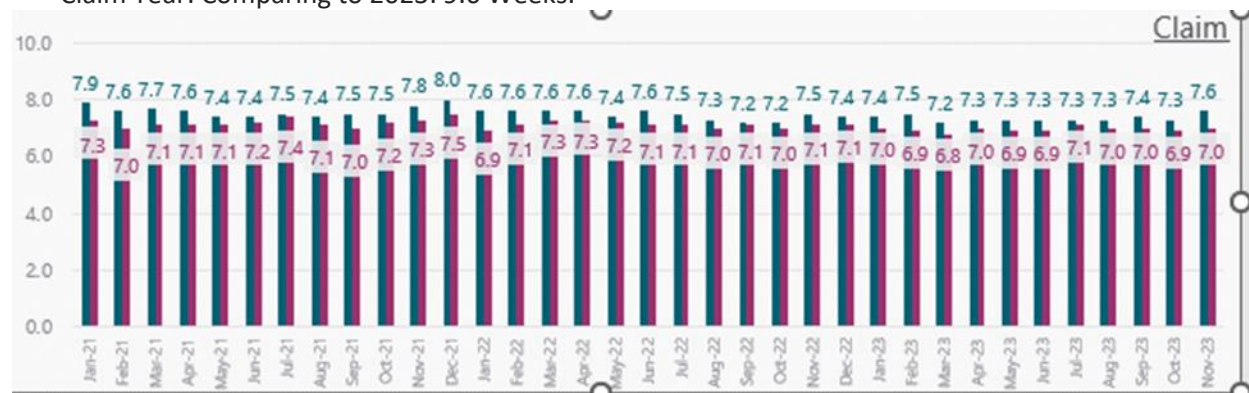
- The percentage of claims approved continues to be relatively stable over the past year.
- Unique leave claims in the last 12 months – 126,759 family leave and 137,017 medical leave
- November 2023 total unique paid leave claims: 40,809
  - 12% more than November of last year
- October was the highest we've ever seen.
  - 48% family- 52% medical

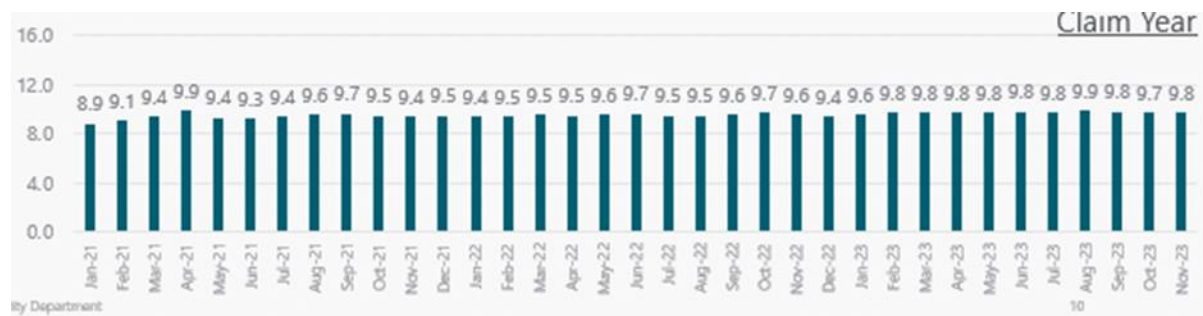
#### Weekly Benefit Levels

- Jan-Nov 2023 average: \$1,004
  - 7% higher than Jan-Nov of 2022, \$936

#### Average Lengths of Leave

- Claim: Comparing to 2022**
  - Family: 7.6 weeks
  - Medical: 7.3 weeks
- Claim Year: Comparing to 2023: 9.6 Weeks.**





### Fiscal Projections

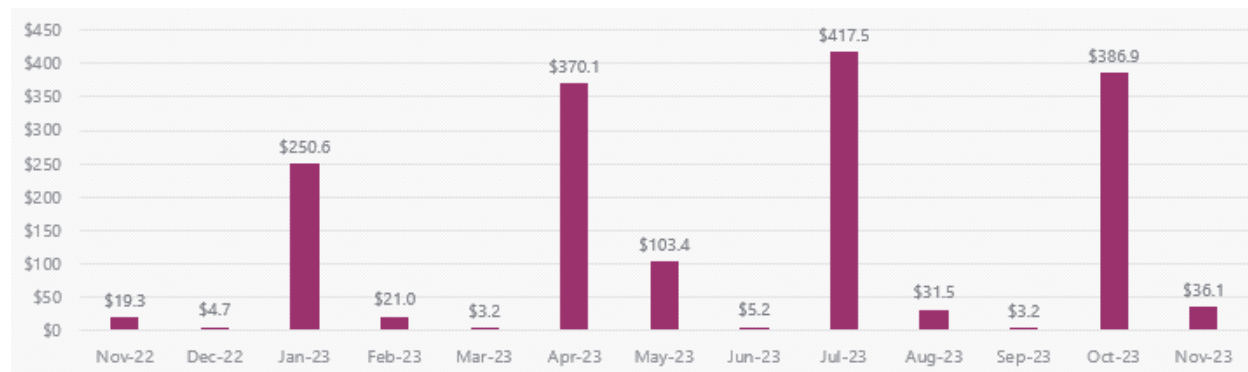
- Minimum estimated balance
  - Mid-Jan: ~\$250 million
- Lowered risk of short-term deficit in future cycles but still a concern for a couple years
- Will take a few years to establish 3-month reserve.

### Monthly Benefit Paid

- November 2023 had \$123.5 million in benefits paid.
  - 19% less than October
  - 19% more than last November
- \$1.4 billion in benefits paid in 2023 Jan-Nov
  - \$255 million more, or 24% higher, than 2022 Jan-Nov
- \$120.8 million average monthly benefits paid over the preceding twelve months.
- We broke \$1 Billion on September 13, 2023.
- 2022 we did not break \$1 Billion until November 7, 2022
- Expecting a little less than \$1.5 Billion in total benefits this year

### Monthly Premiums Remitted

- Cyclical pattern of highest monthly premium transactions occurring at end of quarterly reporting months
- Premiums assessed for each quarter are remitted in the following quarter.
- Q3 Premiums remitted Oct-Nov were \$422.9 million compared to \$301.1 million in same period of 2022—an increase of 40%



**Monthly Ending Account Balance**

- November 2022 ending balance was \$97.5 million
- November 2023 ending balance was \$418.7 million
- November year over year increase in account balance due to:
  - o \$200 million FY23 supplemental budget transfer
  - o \$121.2 million excess of total revenues over expenditures (includes benefits and administrative expenses)

**Time From Application Submission to Payment**

- November 2022
  - o Average weeks-4.3
  - o Median Weeks-3.0
- **November 2023**
  - o Average Weeks-4.6
  - o Median weeks-4.4

**Phones**

- Since September 2022:
  - o 28% decrease in calls into queue.
  - o 40% decrease in calls answered
- November 2023(includes WA Cares)
  - % of calls into queue- 37%
  - % of calls answered from Paid Leave queue- 57%
- **Queue time for Paid Leave- 28:19**

**Question: Tammy Hetrick asked- How do you plan to apply process improvements?**

John Mattes- We submitted a request for additional staff under the staffing model. We ran incoming projections to show that the staffing model accurately reflects the staff we are requesting. We are actively filling 11 spots and many of those positions are DL positions.

Justin DeFour- (during advisory) Both decision packages have been fully funded in the Governor's budget.

## 2023 Annual Report Highlights

Julie York: Research and Data Team:

### Program Participant Demographics and Employer Characteristics

- We included customers who submitted benefit applications between July 2022 – June 2023, and were approved with at least one payment.
- Using census data for the demographics and wage reports for the employment characteristics, we constructed estimates of
  - 1) Washington workers who meet work history eligibility requirements and
  - 2) all Washington workers.
- We looked at participation by age, gender, race, language preference, county, average hourly wage, employer size, and employer industry.
- In addition to the [annual report](#), these comparisons can be viewed on the [Paid Leave Demographics Dashboard on the ESD website](#).

### Age continues to be the most significant driver behind program participation.

- Customer comparison to eligible WA workers and all WA workers by age



### Female customers appear to have higher participation rates.

- Customer comparison to eligible WA workers and all WA workers by gender



**Question: Julia Gorton asked- Would you say female participation is overrepresented in our program?**

Julie York- Yes

**AI/AN, Asian, White, and customers who identify as another race appear to have lower participation.**

○ **Customer comparison to eligible WA workers and all WA workers by race**



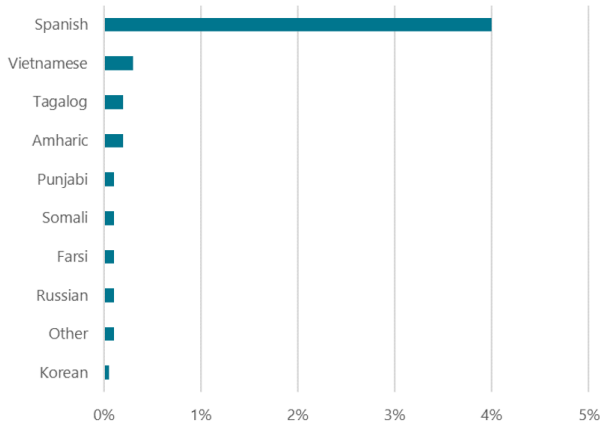
**Looking at race, gender, and age together provides a better view of racial subgroup participation.**



Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates Public Use Microdata Sample 2021 & WA Paid Leave Administrative Data 7/1/2022 - 6/30/2023

**Some customers may be more likely to experience language as a barrier and require additional assistance.**

○ **Top ten languages preferred by WA Paid Leave Customers**



Source: WA Paid Leave Administrative Data 7/1/2022 - 6/30/2023

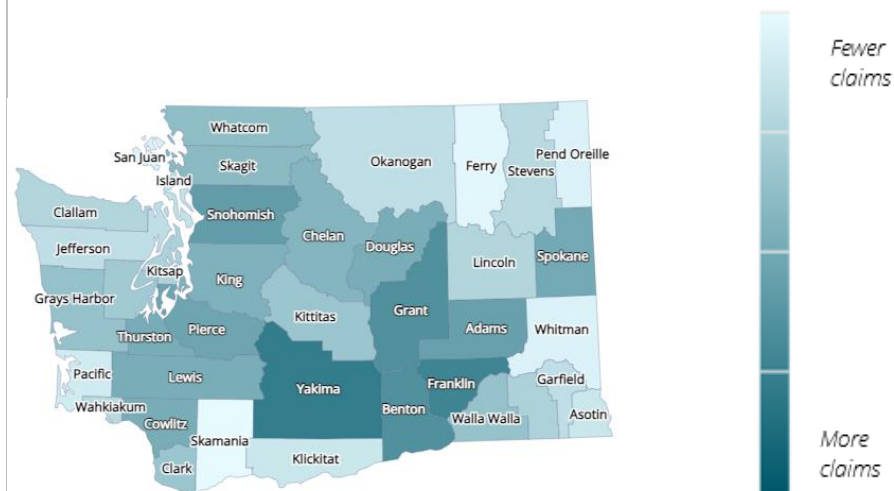
**Top ten languages spoken at home by WA workers:**

- Spanish
- Chinese
- Vietnamese
- Russian
- Tagalog
- Korean
- Hindi
- Mandarin
- Ukrainian
- French

**Question from Samantha Grad- Can you walk us through how you get this information? Is it in a drop down, filling in their language, how do you ensure the language is represented correctly and someone is not choosing a language that is not correct because their option is not listed?**

Julie York- There is a drop down to choose from and there is an option to choose “other” if the specific language is not listed.

**Participation varies by county.**



**Those in the lower wage groups appear to have higher participation, but lower rates of eligibility.**

○ **Customer comparison to eligible WA workers and all WA workers by average hourly wage**



**Those who work for small employers appear to have lower participation and lower rates of eligibility.**

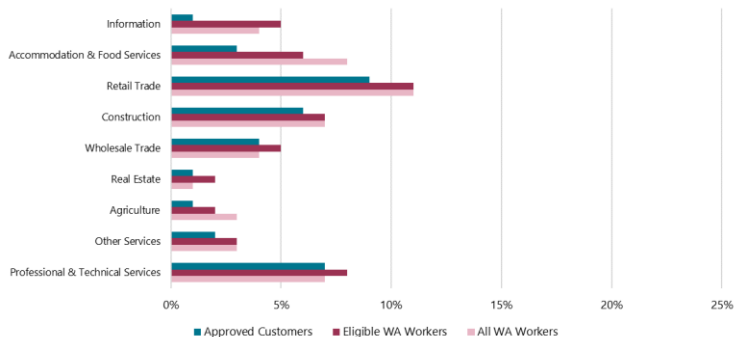
○ **Customer comparison to eligible WA workers and all WA workers by employer size**



**Those who work in Accommodation & Food and Agriculture appear to have lower participation and lower rates of eligibility.**



○ **Customer comparison to eligible WA workers and all WA workers by employer industry (arranged by largest difference)**



***Question from Julia Gorton- It looks like you were able to grab the demographics information that Dr. Hill said was not available. (Refers to the UW study on Job Retention from PFML)***

Rebecca Grady- The demographics Dr Hill was speaking of are still not available. We are not just looking at Paid Leave program customers, we are looking more widely across all of Washington Work Force. We do not get demographics from someone until an application is saved, therefore the Census data is different from the Paid Leave information being gathered. The Census also does not have questions that allow us to understand or gather job protection data/status.

***Question from Julia Gorton- Who is over-looking and managing the information that Dr. Hill is submitting to the legislature?***

Rebecca Grady- We do review some of the work and information being submitted.

***Comment from Bob Battles- Dr. Hill's reports to leg did imply that this data contradicts.***

## 2023 In Review and Current Program Highlights

### Alison Eldridge

- Managed 30 projects through the division's portfolio process:
- 12 currently in progress, 18 completed.
  - Developed and deployed six major technology releases comprised of 89 features and 49 fixes, including:
- Improvements to the Paid Leave benefit application and weekly claim processes.
- Streamlined self-employed elective coverage account and coverage management functionality.
- Additional tooling to increase data quality and flexibility in data management.
- Enhancements to employer accounts, reporting, payments, and other employer processes.
- Migration of Paid Leave's customer case management system to the cloud.
- Increased outreach activities to employers, healthcare providers, agency partners, and community-based organizations statewide.

<b><u>John Mattes</u></b>	<b><u>Partnered with Employment Connections Division to provide Paid Leave help in WorkSource Centers.</u></b>
<p>Paid Leave + WorkSource Key Accomplishments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training available for Employment connections and partner staff.</li> <li>• Materials created for WorkSource use.</li> <li>• Piloting several initiatives in select offices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Phone support</li> <li>○ In-person services</li> <li>○ Paid Leave orientation</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Question: How do you get those calling from in a WorkSource office into the phone que?</b></p> <p>John Mattes- They do get higher priority in the phone que. They don't go directly to the front, but they also do not go to the end of the que.</p> <p><b>Question from Edsonya Charles- Do we have the higher caller message and the "please hang up" option with these phones?</b></p> <p>John Mattes- At this time we are unsure, we can look into this and let you know.</p> <p><b>Question from Samantha Grad: How do you get an appointment from WorkSource with Paid Leave staff?</b></p> <p>John Mattes- WorkSource tries to help customers and if they are still needing additional assistance, then WorkSource offers to schedule them an appointment with the Paid Leave staff member.</p> <p><b>Question from Samantha Grad- Was this pilot work included in the Governor's budget decision package.</b></p> <p>John Mattes- This WorkSource pilot work was not included.</p> <p>Justin DeFour- We are making more efforts to be more involved with UI and Employment Connections as well.</p>	
<b><u>Alison Eldridge: Further Improvements to the Program interface</u></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Enabling Employers to add multiple contacts within their accounts.</li> <li>○ Display benefit customer bank of hours</li> <li>○ Functionality also includes a banner that displays when a person is running low on hours.</li> </ul> <p><i>Comment from Edsonya Charles- Workers will be able to see the leave balance which is exciting because this is currently a frequent issue when claims are brought to the Ombuds.</i></p>	

### Current Priorities

Project	Status	Target end date
Enable remaining employers to report online	Close out	10/31/2023
Employer webinars	In progress	12/31/2023
WA Cares: Elective coverage reporting and payments	In progress	12/31/2023
Annual changes 2024	In progress	1/15/2024
2023 1099s	In progress	1/31/2024
Increase equitable benefit access using data	In progress	2/1/2024
Cloud migration: AX and portal	In progress	3/1/2024
Expiring CBA provision for Paid Leave	In progress	3/31/2024
Sharing employee benefit data with employers (5586)	In progress	3/31/2024
Community engagement model for Paid Leave benefits	In progress	4/30/2024
TNC pilot for elective coverage (1570)	Initiating	7/1/2024
Benefit application improvements	Initiating	7/1/2024

**Question:** *Can you briefly touch on communication efforts with employers who have a CBA expiring soon?*

Alison Eldridge- We do have communication that goes out to employers through the Employer Newsletter, but the issue is that we do not know all the impacted employers to contact them directly. We used comparisons to UI data also.

**ACTION ITEM:** Alison will get Edsonya the Communications plan.

Re: 5586 Giving employers access to information about their current employees' benefit claims:

Requires full access account role:

Account Administrator

Paid Leave Benefit Claims

Allows them to access Benefit applications detail and Weekly claims detail.

#### Phase Two

- Better utilize employment dates
  - Displace data using dates of employment.
- Displace applications in additional statuses.
  - Submitted
  - Reviewed
- Upgrading our POA System
  - Allow Employer Agents to view benefit data in the employer context.
  - Self-Service POA accessible in the employer and employer agent accounts

**Future Work** (*Bolded items below are components of, or enable progress toward, completion of the Paid Leave balance of work*)

- **Next**
  - **Redetermination improvements**
  - Develop a division employee engagement plan.
  - Support performance management
  - **Withhold child support from Paid Leave benefits.**
  - **Crossmatch UI with Paid Leave benefits**
- **Later**
  - **Benefit overpayments**
  - **Penalties and interest (employer and employee)**
  - **Adding county & legislative district to database**
  - **Elective coverage for tribes**
  - **Crossmatching L&I with Paid Leave benefits**
  - **Collections (employer & employee)**
  - **Conditional benefit payments**
  - Pre-application for benefits
  - Implement community engagement program.
  - Implement comprehensive authorized representative process

## Future Advisory meetings:

*Since the meeting the new schedule has been posted on the website and is attached to meeting materials*

## Open Comment

No Open Comments

Meeting Adjourned 2:21 PM

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*Next meeting: Friday January 19, 2024, 2 to 3 PM  
(Hybrid: Zoom and In-person 212 Maple Park Ave SE, Olympia, WA 98501)*

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