

Paid Family & Medical Leave Advisory Committee Meeting



Wednesday, March 25, 2026

Meeting structure

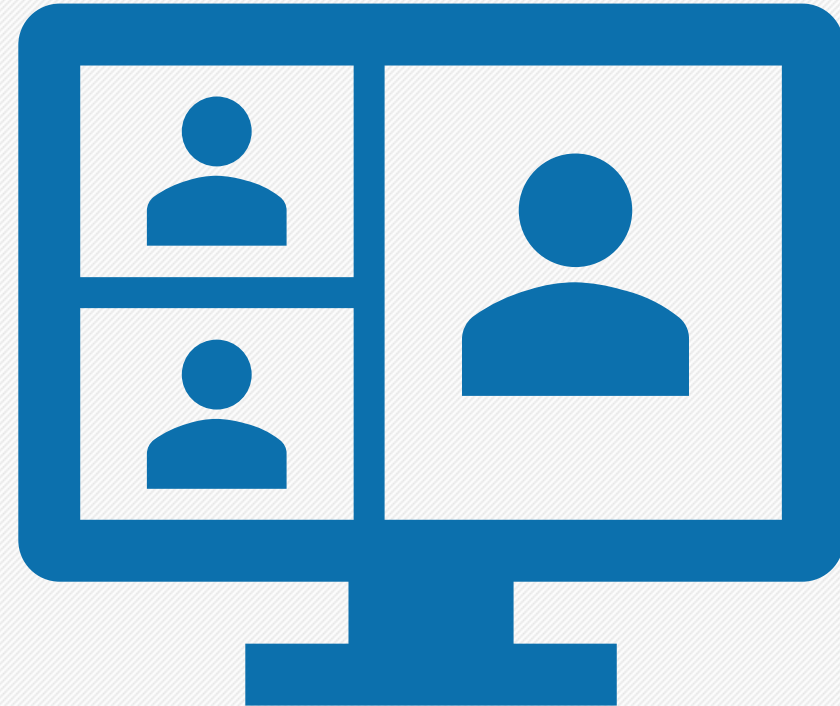


- Only Committee members and presenters will be unmuted during the meeting.
- We ask members of the public to hold comments until the open comment period.
- Comments and questions in chat will not be reviewed during open comment.

Roll call



- Advisory members will confirm attendance when name is called



Agenda



Agenda:

- I. Approve February minutes
- II. Legislative wrap up
- III. SHB 2345 Communications plan
- IV. Program priorities
- V. Open comment

Appendix:

- I. Program experience
- II. Performance metrics
- III. Account projections

Approve February minutes



Legislative wrap-up



Josh Dye, Government Relations Director

Paid Leave legislation that passed



2SSB 5292 – Paid Leave premium rate setting

- Premium rate to be set based on actuarial report
- Lowest rate necessary to maintain solvency and close with a 4-month reserve
- 1.2% maximum rate still in place
- 2029 will be the first year the premium rate is set in this way

2SHB 2345 – ARL regarding Paid Leave contributions

- Response to implementing the IRS guidance on tax liability for Paid Leave benefits
- Keeps the contributions of employers and employees the same but adjust the family/medical rates
- 2027 will be the first year the premium rate is set in this way

Paid Leave legislation that passed



Budget proviso includes a new legislative report

- Focusing on Paid Leave solvency and program integrity
 - Solvency should include:
 - Potential program changes needed to achieve long-term solvency
 - The economic implications of those changes
 - State-to-state comparison of other Paid Leave programs
 - Program integrity should include:
 - Current practices in place
 - Review of RCW/WACs
 - Review of best practices from other state benefit programs
- Allows for Paid Leave Advisory members to comment on report
- Due to legislature Nov 1, 2026

2SHB 2345 Communications plan



Rob Wells, Leave and Care Communications Manager

Communications about IRS Guidance



Initial steps:

- ESD website (esd.wa.gov):
 - Announcement written and posted to agency blog on March 11, 2026
 - Contains link to the bill signed by Gov. Ferguson
 - Also provides links to the original IRS guidance and subsequent extension
- Employer newsletter:
 - Announcement distributed via email to Washington businesses on March 13, 2026
- Talking points for ESD staff:
 - Written for and distributed to public-facing ESD staff on March 11, 2026

Messaging strategy



In the near term...

- ESD staff will proactively:
 - Review and update resources for frontline staff - FAQs, training materials, talking points and phone scripts (Summer 2026)
 - Engage in direct outreach beginning in late Spring 2026 to voluntary plan employers to help ensure understanding and compliance.
 - Share information with employers/TPAs as details become available for their system updates
 - Create updated videos/webinars for employers (April 2026)
 - Begin review of calculations, toolkits and other resources used on the Paid Leave website (May 2026)
 - Beginning in May 2026 and continuing into early 2027, publish articles on a recurring basis in upcoming employer newsletters to share resources

Messaging about premium split



In Fall 2026...

- ESD:
 - Will follow the usual communications timelines, methods and procedures
 - As is customary, will calculate rates in October and communicate them in November
 - Will release all updated, finalized, detailed information (physical mail, email newsletter, and website) along with the 2027 premium rate communications.

Program priorities



Alison Eldridge, Deputy Director

Portfolio status overview



Leave and Care | Portfolio Dashboard Status Report As of March 5, 2026





➔ Overall Health
 — Report Date
● Close Out
 ● On Target
 ● At Risk
 ● High Risk
 ● N/A (planning)
 ☆ Complete




Lvl	Project Description	Theme	Sch	Res	Risk	Q4 - 2025	Q1 - 2026	Q2 - 2026	Q3 - 2026
1	2025 1099Gs	Annual project	●	●	●	02/24/2026 ☆			
2	Elective coverage for Tribes	Balance of Work	●	●	●	04/15/2026			
2	WA Cares Annual Statements 2026	WA Cares	●	●	●	04/30/2026			
5	Paid Leave Benefit Overpayments	Balance of Work	●	●	●	06/30/2026			
5	Paid Employer Responsibilities	Balance of Work	●	●	●	06/30/2026			
2	Equitable hiring: Implementation of EO 24-04 and 24-05	Legislation	●	●	●	07/01/2026			
0	WA Cares: Pilot and Production	WA Cares	●	●	●	07/01/2026			
2	2026 Employer Sizing, HB 1213	Legislative	●	●	●	09/30/2026			
2	Quality Assurance Revamp	Enhancement	●	●	●	09/30/2026			
3	WA Cares Out-of-State Coverage	WA Cares	●	●	●		01/20/2027		
4	One Washington	Enhancements	●	●	●	03/01/2027			

Balance of work project

Status as of March 19



Program	
Schedule	
Scope	
Budget	

-  In Progress, on-schedule
-  In Progress, behind
-  Risk to go live

- **All March milestones successfully completed.**
 - ✓ Case management for overpayment assessments
 - ✓ Fraud, fault and overpayment reason data collection
 - ✓ Employer case management for conference & conciliation
 - ✓ Identify missing wage reports
 - ✓ Missing report penalty
 - ✓ Billing statements
- **June milestones progressing steadily.**
 - **June deliverables remain on-track.** Remaining backlog items to be fully developed by the end of the current sprint, keeping us aligned with the June delivery timeline.
 - **Teams continue to validate feasibility** against the current timeline and resource plan; no risks to scope or delivery have been identified at this time.
- **Budget is stable and within approved limits.** Minor variances tied primarily to professional service contract activity but remain manageable.

Public comment



Public comment



- If you would like to make public comment, please raise your virtual hand.
- When called on, state and spell your name, and state the organization you represent, if any.
- Please limit your comments to two minutes.
- If you would like your comments to be included in the meeting minutes, please submit them in writing via email to Erika Barboza at erika.barboza@esd.wa.gov. (Erika's email will be posted in the chat).

Next meeting



1:30 – 3:30 pm on Wednesday, May 27

Proposed topics

- Ombuds annual report

Thank you



Visit us online at
www.paidleave.wa.gov



Join our listserv at
bit.ly/PaidLeaveList

Appendix I.

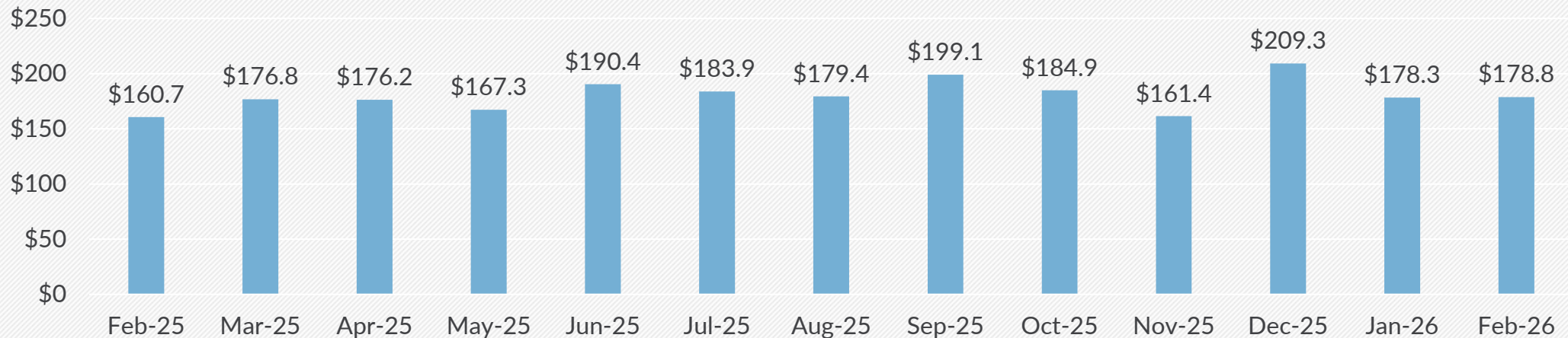


Program experience

Monthly Benefit Payments



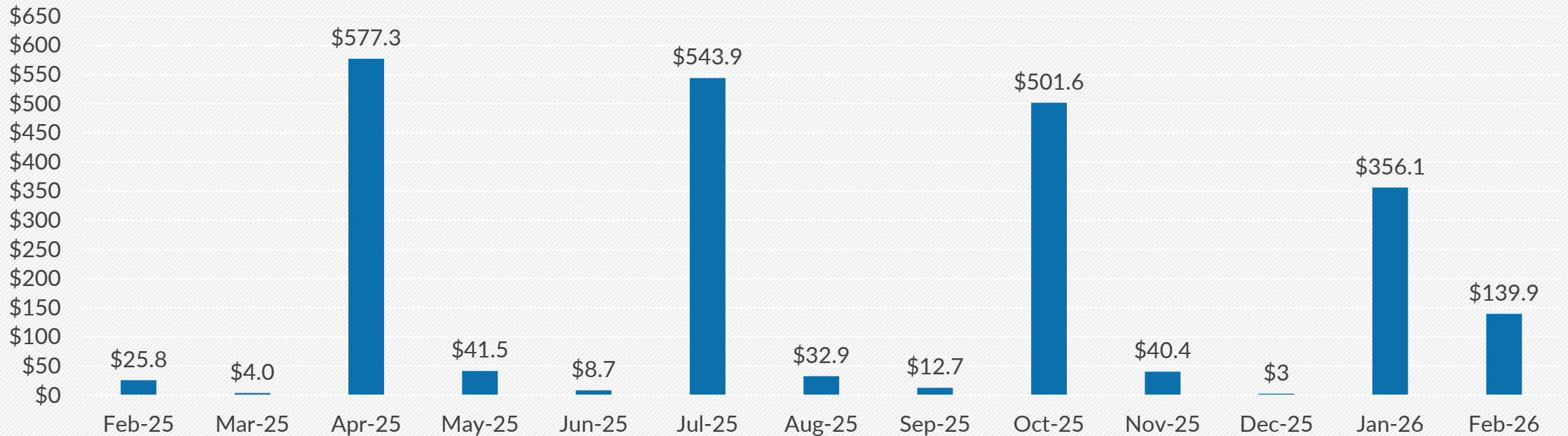
- February 2026, \$179 million benefits paid
 - About the same as the prior month
 - 11% more than February 2025
- \$180.6 million avg. monthly payments for previous 12 months
- February 2026, avg. weekly benefit for new claim years was \$1,164



Monthly Premiums Remitted



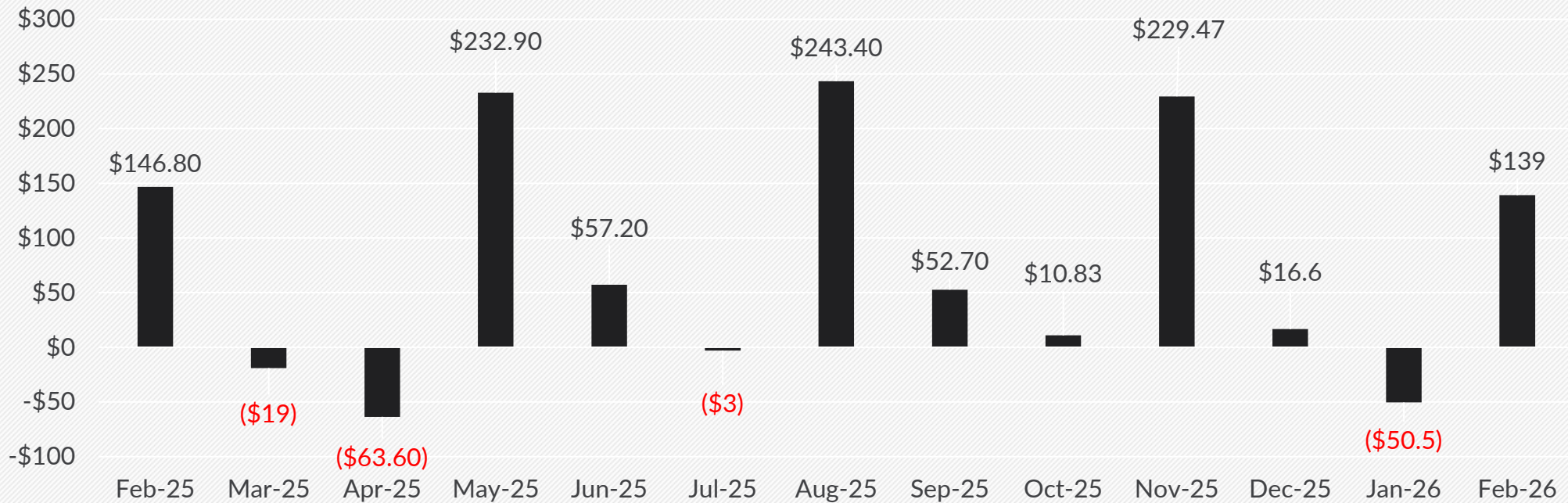
- February 2026, \$140 million in premiums remitted
- \$2.15 billion in premiums remitted in previous 12 months



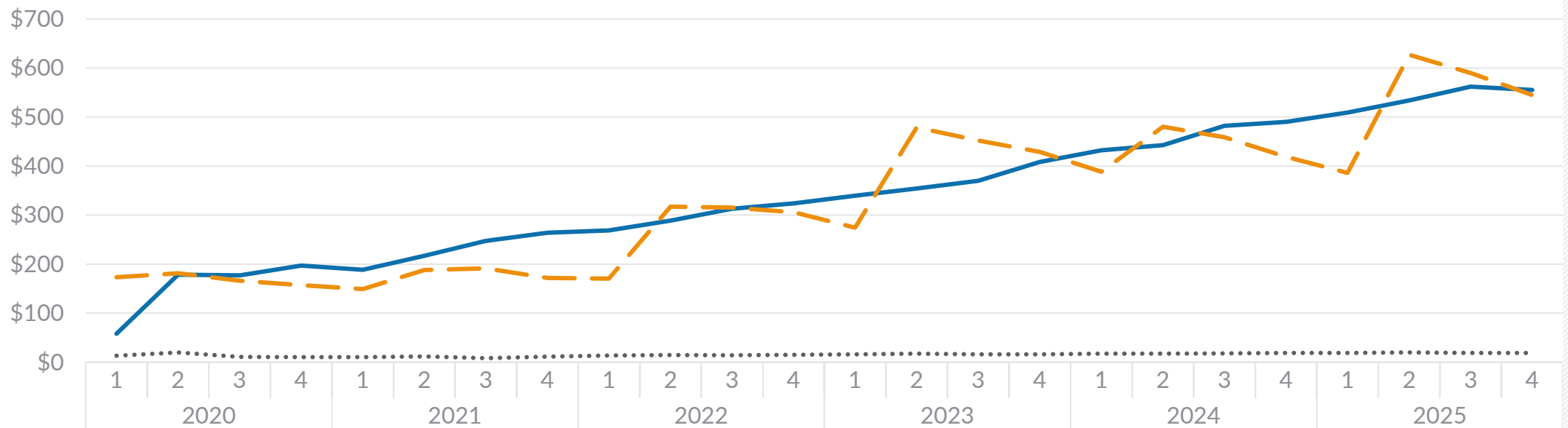
Monthly Account Balance



- Ending account balance for February 2026 was \$139 million
 - \$189.5 million more than the prior month
 - \$8 million less than February 2025



Premiums, benefits, operating expenses, and account balance by quarter (millions)



	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	2020				2021				2022				2023				2024				2025			
— Benefits	\$58	\$179	\$177	\$197	\$189	\$217	\$248	\$264	\$269	\$289	\$313	\$324	\$339	\$355	\$370	\$409	\$432	\$443	\$482	\$490	\$509	\$534	\$562	\$555
— Premiums	\$173	\$181	\$166	\$157	\$149	\$188	\$191	\$172	\$170	\$317	\$315	\$306	\$275	\$479	\$452	\$429	\$389	\$480	\$459	\$419	\$386	\$627	\$590	\$545
..... Operating	\$13	\$20	\$11	\$11	\$10	\$12	\$8	\$11	\$14	\$15	\$14	\$15	\$16	\$18	\$16	\$16	\$18	\$17	\$18	\$19	\$19	\$20	\$19	\$19
Account Balance	\$467	\$454	\$427	\$376	\$327	\$287	\$222	\$123	\$19	\$32	\$17	-\$19	-\$98	\$211	\$278	\$284	\$222	\$237	\$209	\$97	-\$19	\$57	\$53	\$17

Appendix II.



Program performance metrics

Performance metrics



Benefits wait time

- Time to application decision
- Time to first weekly claim processed

Customer contact response time

- Phone hold time
- Secure message & email response time

Employer accounts

- Full account access

Performance metric - Benefit wait time



Time to application decision
Goal: 75% within 14 days
(historical "target two weeks")

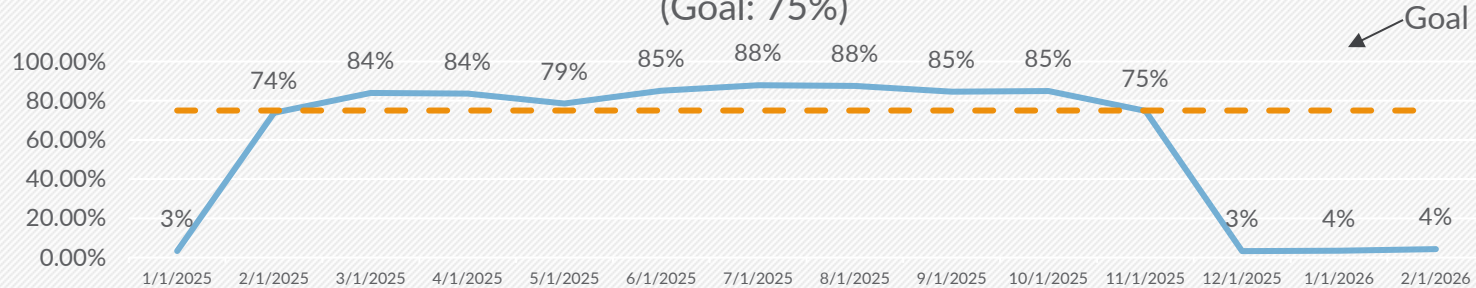


Time to first weekly claim processed
Goal: 75% within 21 days

Leave processing times

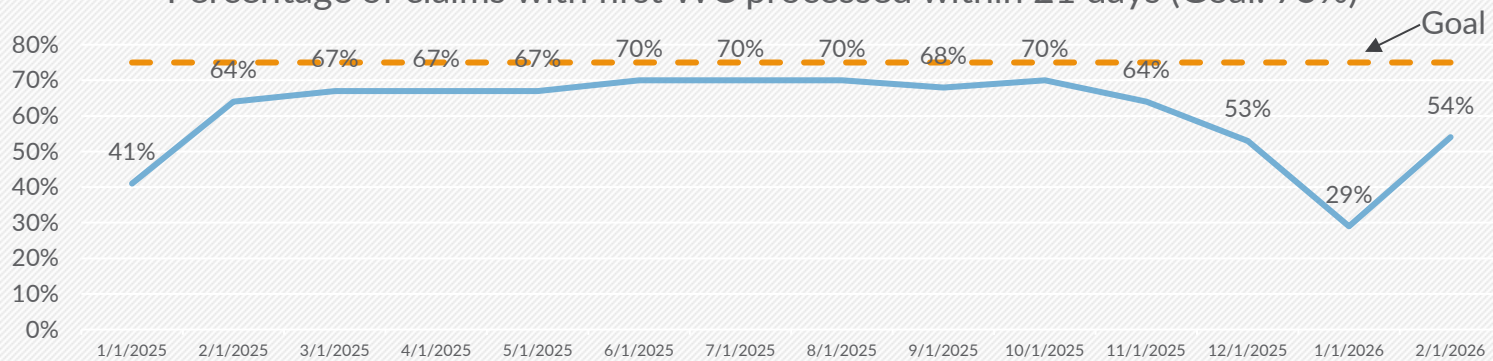


Percentage of applications initially adjudicated within 14 days
(Goal: 75%)



- February 2026, short of goal with 4% of leave applications initially adjudicated within 14 days
 - Similar to the prior month
 - 70 percentage points less than Feb '25
 - 75% of applications with decisions in February 2026 were processed within 19 or fewer days

Percentage of claims with first WC processed within 21 days (Goal: 75%)



- February 2026, under goal with 54% of applications having first weekly claim processed within 21 days
 - 19 percentage points more than prior month
 - 10 percentage points less than Feb 2025
 - February 2026, 75% of claims had first weekly claim processed in 29 or fewer days

Customer contact response time



Phone hold time

Goal: 80% within 10 minutes

With zero receiving "high call volume" message



Secure message & email response time

Goal: 80% within 1 business day (or 2 calendar days)

Will need new tech functionality to track



Overall responsiveness goal

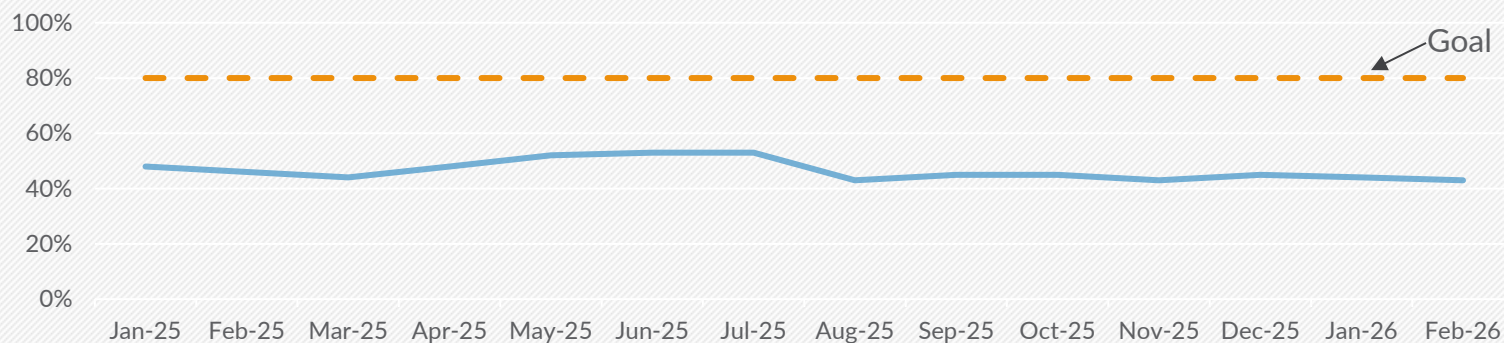
80% of contacts meeting response time goals

Split out tracking by contact type and customer

Phones responsiveness



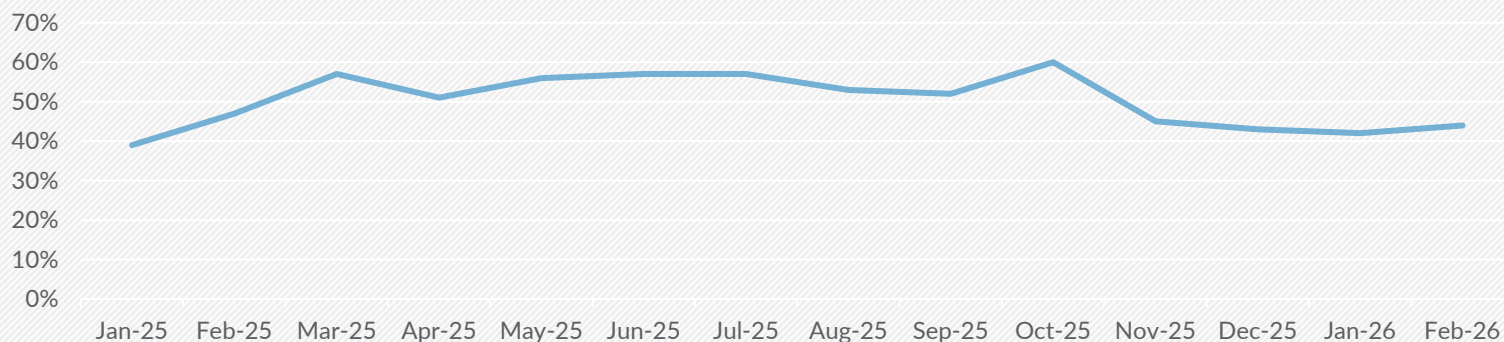
Phone hold time less than 10 minutes (Goal: 80%)



- February 2026, 43% of Paid Leave calls were answered within 10 minutes.

- 1 percentage point less than the prior month
- 3 percentage points less than Feb 2025

Percentage of calls into queue



- February 2026, 44% of calls went into a queue

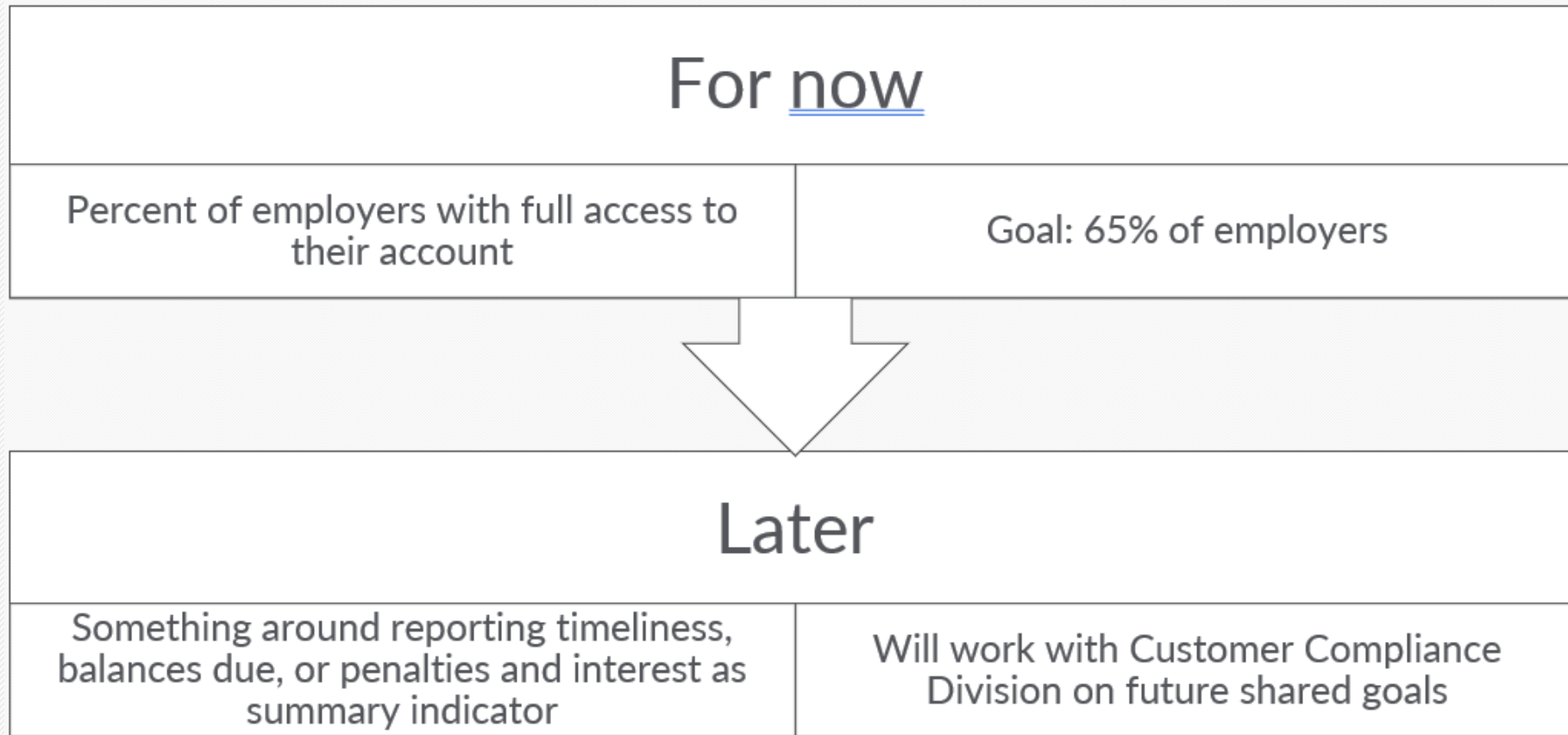
- 1 percentage point less than the prior month
- 3 percentage points less than Feb 2025

Coming soon...



- Monthly tracking of progress toward
 - 80% of emails responded to within 1 business day
 - 80% of secure messages responded to within 1 business day

Employer accounts

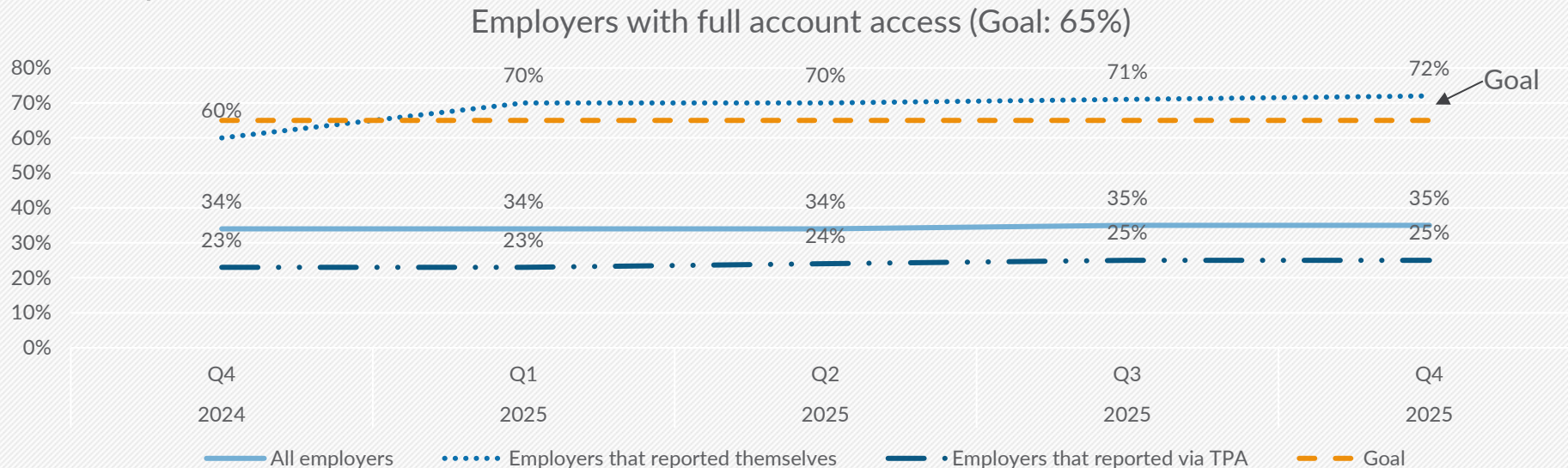


Employers with full account access



Goal: 65% of employers with quarterly reporting had full employer account access

- Q4 2025:
 - 35% of all employers had full access – same as previous quarter
 - 25% of employers using a TPA had full access – same as previous quarter
 - 72% of self-reporting employers had full access – 1 percentage point more than previous quarter



Summary of program performance goals

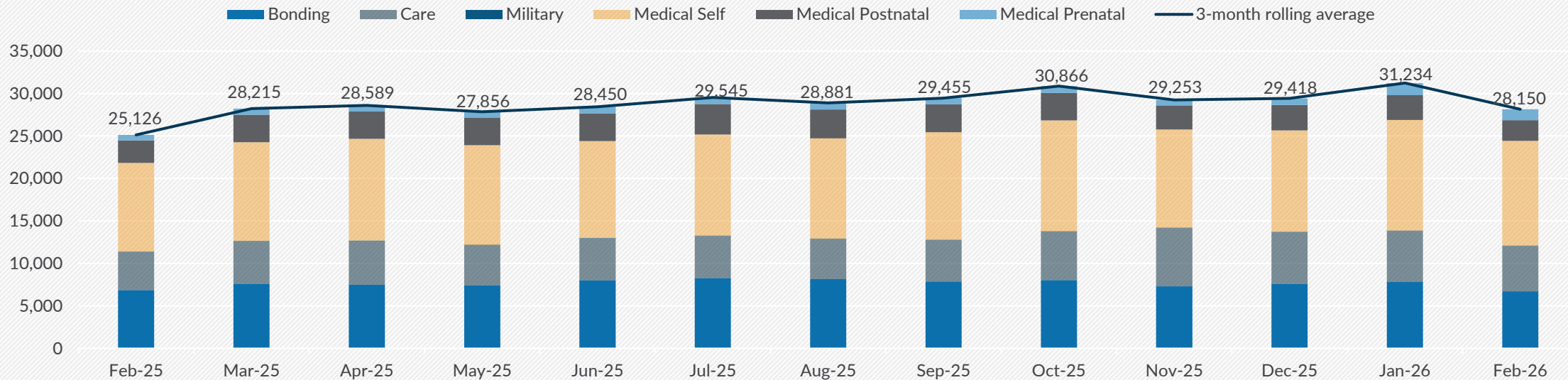


Performance Metric	Performance Goal	Current Status
Time to application decision	75% of applications with initial decision within 14 days	4%
Time to first weekly claim processed	75% of applications with first weekly claim processed within 21 days	54%
Phone hold time	80% of customers with less than 10-minute hold time	43% met hold time goal
Secure message & email response time	80% customers receiving a response in 1 business day	TBD
Full account access	65% of employer accounts with full access	35%

Claim applications submitted by type



- February 2026, we received 28.2 thousand applications
 - 10% less than prior month
 - 12% more than February 2025
- 43% family, 57% medical
- Three-month rolling average: 28 thousand

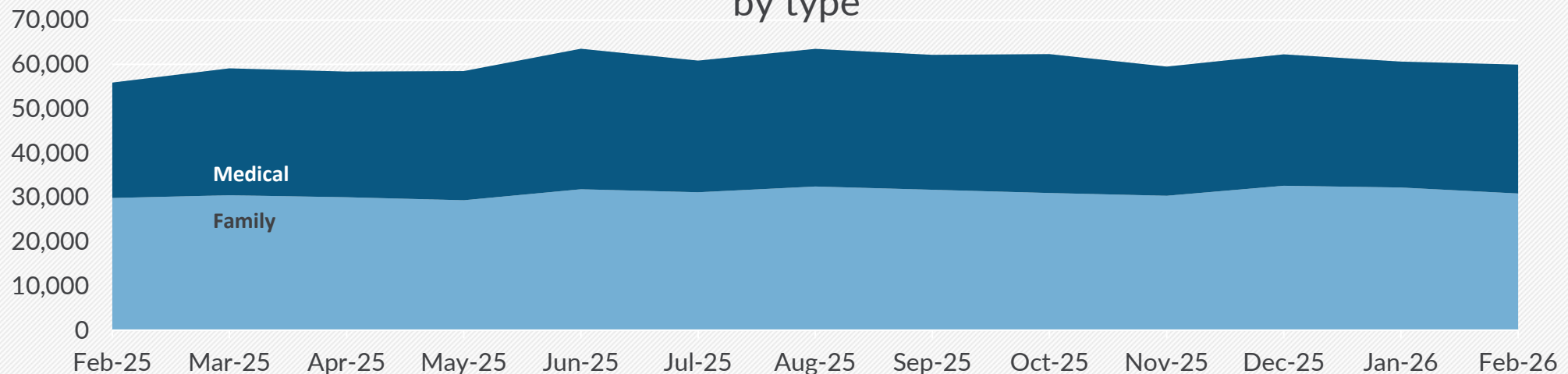


Claims with payments and approval rates



- February 2026, 81% of claims were approved
 - 84% were approved in the prior month
 - Current month typically lower than prior month (data maturity)
- February 2026, total unique paid claims was 59,982
 - 3% more than prior month

Claims with at least one payment in month
by type



Phones



Month	Number of calls received for Paid Leave	Percentage of calls into queue*	Percentage of calls answered from Paid Leave queue	Queue time for Paid Leave
February 2025	29,925	47%	60%	28:47
March 2025	32,189	57%	59%	26:50
April 2025	33,624	51%	57%	28:13
May 2025	34,886	56%	50%	23:54
June 2025	33,238	57%	51%	23:37
July 2025	37,587	57%	51%	25:21
August 2025	31,535	53%	59%	27:54
September 2025	33,300	54%	60%	27:37
October 2025	36,925	60%	58%	26:01
November 2025	26,825	45%	54%	31:56
December 2025	34,973	43%	54%	29:20
January 2026	34,688	42%	48%	31:37
February 2026	32,577	44%	49%	33:54

Appendix III.



Account balance projections

Account balance projections through 2026



- Periods of short-term deficits are expected to continue leading up to quarterly premium collections.
- Current trends are expecting to have long-term deficits beginning in 2029.

