

Meeting Minutes

Paid Family & Medical Leave Advisory Committee

March 25, 2026 | 1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. | [Zoom](#) | 212 Maple Park Ave SE, Olympia, WA 98501

Attendees	
Committee members	<p><u>Committee Members</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jennifer Richards, Insurance Services Director • Edsonya Charles, PFML Ombuds <p><u>Employee Representatives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samantha Grad, Teamsters 117 • Maggie Humphries, Moms Rising • Sam Hatzenbeler, Economic Opportunity Institute <p><u>Employer Representatives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Crandall, Association of Washington Business • Rose Gundersen- Washington Retail Association • Jan Himebaugh, Building Industry Association of Washington (BAW)
ESD staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Mattes- Deputy Director • Alison Eldridge- Deputy Director • Josh Dye- Government Relations Director • Brian Kennedy- Leave and Care Legislative Manager • Chris Barron- Communications Director • Rob Wells- Leave and Care Communications Manager • Rebecca Grady, Leave and Care Research& Data Manager • April Amundson- Leave and Care Policy Manager • Eve Sheng- Managing Actuary • Karissa Burgess- Actuary 2 • Todd Dixon- Strategic Operations Manager • Kennidi Hunsicker, Administrative Assistant 4- Host • Colin Helsley- Co-Host • Erika Ayala, Administrative Assistant 4- Taking notes
Committee members absent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joe Kendo, Washington State Labor Council • Tammie Hetrick, Washington Food Industry Association
For more information, please visit the UIAC website at esd.wa.gov/UIAC .	

Welcome and Agenda review

Time	Topic
1:00 p.m.	Approve February minutes
1:05 p.m.	Legislative wrap up
1:10 p.m.	SHB 2345 communications plan
1:20 p.m.	Program priorities
1:25 p.m.	Open comment
1:30 p.m.	Adjourn
For more information please visit the PFML website at paidleave.wa.gov/advisory-committee .	

Approve February Minutes

- Meeting started at 01:00 p.m.
- Motion to approve February 25th, 2026, PFML AC meeting minutes
 - James Crandall motions to approve
 - Multiple Advisory Members second
 - All members attending are in favor
 - February 25th, 2026, PFML AC meeting minutes are adopted

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
 - [New law addresses IRS guidance on state's Paid Family & Medical Leave program | Employment Security Department](#)
- 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
- Our current approach to this work is a now, next, later mindset
- Rose Gunderson- The program integrity bullet points, are those specified in the budget proviso?
- Josh Dye- Yes, it lays out some specific things for us to look at. We are looking at other benefit programs as well such as Health Care Authority, other national PFML programs, etc. The bullet points are summarized callouts of the specific proviso.
- JR- I just want to say that the work under program integrity, it's to strengthen and not that we don't current have program integrity
- James Crandall-Do you have a vision, will there be a preliminary version and timeframe for this work?
- Josh Dye- This is subject to change, but the goal is to have some first thoughts in late spring/early summer and one of the requirements in the proviso is for Paid Leave Advisory Committee members to provide comments on this.
- Rose Gunderson- Would you be open to thoughts and suggestions before you even roll out to preview?
- Josh- Yes, send those to Josh Dye or Brian Kennedy and we will be happy to review.

SHB 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
- [Employer Newsletter | Employment Security Department](#)
- Jan Himebaugh- What is your open rate on the Employer Newsletter?
- Rob Wells- 40%

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 Summer 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

Portfolio status overview

- 2025 1099Gs- Annual Project- Closeout 02.24.2026
- Elective coverage for tribes- Balance of Work- On target
- WA Cares Annual Statements 2026- Annual Project- On target
- Paid Leave Benefit Overpayments- Balance of Work- At Risk
- Paid Employer Responsibilities- Balance of Work- At Risk
- Equitable Hiring: Implementation of EO 24-04 and 24-05- Legislation- On target
- WA Cares: Pilot and Production- WA Cares- On target
- 2026 Employer Sizing, HB1213- Legislative- On target
- Quality Assurance Revamp- Enhancements- On target
- WA Cares Out-of-State Coverage- WA Cares- On target
- One Washington- Enhancements- At Risk

Balance of work project

- Balance of work- The original component of the Paid Leave Law we continue to work on
- 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
 - There was a big tech release in March that delivered the technology functionalities needs to “complete” some of this work.
 - Missing report and billing statements were completed on the technology functionality piece but not implemented yet. We continue to work on the remaining work which is implementing
- 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 Comments

Adjourned

JR Richards thanked everyone for their continued active participation and for their commitment to this work. Meeting adjourned: 1:25 p.m.

2026 Meetings

The next Paid Family & Medical Leave Advisory Committee meeting is on:

- May 17, 2026 – 01:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. – Zoom Meeting

Proposed Topics

- Ombuds annual report

Contact information

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Employment Security Department

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