



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Knox County Unveils New Maternity Leave Policy**

*KNOXVILLE, Tenn.*— At the November Commission meetings, Knox County’s Human Resources Department introduced a new employment policy they hope will help recruit and retain talented workers.

Under the new policy, which applies to both births and adoptions/placements, those eligible for Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) will be compensated for up to eight weeks at their full, regular rate of pay. Parents who are *both* employed by Knox County can either split the time (four weeks each) or give the full eight weeks to one of the parents—this is to ensure paid leave time doesn’t exceed eight weeks per family.

“This is important time for new parents to bond with an infant or the adopted/placed foster child, adjust to changing family dynamics, and get the appropriate follow-up medical care, while minimizing the financial impact,” said Senior Director of Human Resources and Benefits Department Stephanie Candler.

Previously, Knox County’s maternity/paternity leave is granted for a maximum of 16 weeks, unpaid, with the first 12 weeks falling under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the last four weeks falling under the Tennessee Maternity and Adoption Care Leave Law. During this time, accrued sick and annual leave can be used if available, but many employees end up on unpaid leave for the majority of their time off as new parents.

Candler also noted: Numerous studies surrounding maternity/paternity leave tout the positive impacts of paid leave including improvements in maternal and child health outcomes, higher likelihood of seeking and receiving medical care postpartum, lower instances of postpartum depression and anxiety, improved child brain development, increased family bonding and healthier family dynamics, as well as greater financial security and stability. In the private sector, it has been proven to increase profit margins.

“This policy change is an investment in the health and well-being of our workforce,” said Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs. “That, in turn, will offer significantly better outcomes for productivity and performance, reduce absenteeism, and decrease burnout and turnover. It’s a great way to support the people already working here and be more competitive in the recruitment of new team members.”

The new maternity/paternity leave policy applies to departments that fall under the Knox County Mayor’s handbook and any other elected offices that adopt the policy and/or the Mayor’s employee handbook.

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