Health Emergency Labor Standards Act 11-16-2020.

AN ACT Relating to establishing health emergency labor standards; amending…; adding new sections…; and providing an effective date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 49.17 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The department must establish by rule safety standards for workplaces where workers are exposed to infectious or contagious diseases, such as airborne infectious diseases and aerosol transmissible pathogens.

(2) The rules established under subsection (1) may include:

(a) A requirement that employers perform an exposure assessment to determine which employees have occupational exposure to infectious diseases;

(b) An established presumption of exposure for certain workplaces, such as hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, long-term care facilities, and paramedic and emergency medical services;

(c) A requirement that employers create written procedures for infection control in the workplace. These procedures may vary depending on the level of occupational exposure to infectious diseases in the workplace.

(d) A requirement that an employer train its employees on infectious disease control and the employer's established procedures;

(e) A requirement that an employer review its infection control procedures, including records, to determine their effectiveness;

(f) A requirement that an employer maintain feasible engineering and work practice controls to minimize the spread of infectious diseases;

(g) A requirement that employers provide personal protective equipment to employees when engineering and work practice controls are insufficient to protect employees from exposure to infectious diseases;

(h) Different requirements for high hazard procedures, such as procedures performed on persons who have, or are suspected to have, an infectious disease;

(i) Requirements for the use of respirators to prevent the spread of infectious diseases;

(j) A requirement that employers provide medical services to employees with exposure to infectious diseases at no cost to the employee;

(k) Recordkeeping requirements for covered employers; and

(l) Any other requirement deemed necessary by the department to create and implement an infectious disease standard for workplaces.

(3) The requirements of RCW 49.17.050 do not apply to any rulemaking by the department under this section.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Frontline employee" means the following employees:

(a) First responders, including law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical service providers, paramedics, and ambulance drivers.

(b) Employees employed at a hospital, health care facility, nursing home, or assisted living facility who interact in-person with patients or other members of the general public as part of their job duties.

(i) For the purposes of this section:

(A) "Health care facility" has the same meaning as in RCW 9A.50.010.

(B) "Nursing home" means a nursing home licensed under chapter 18.51 RCW.

(C) "Assisted living facility" has the same meaning as in RCW 18.20.020.

(c) Employees performing food processing, food manufacturing, food distribution, farm, and meat packing work.

(i) For the purposes of this section:

(A) "Farm work" means work performed on a farm, in the employ of any person, in connection with the cultivation of the soil, or in connection with raising or harvesting any agricultural or horticultural commodity, including raising, shearing, feeding, caring for, training, and management of livestock, bees, poultry, and furbearing animals and wild life, or in the employ of the owner or tenant or other operator of a farm in connection with the operation, management, conservation, improvement, or maintenance of such farm and its tools and equipment. For the purposes of this subsection, "farm work" includes floriculture.

(B) "Food distribution work" means work where the primary duties include transporting food from food producers or manufacturers to food warehouses or food service operators and retailers.

(C) "Food manufacturing work" means work performed for an employer whose North American industry classification code is within "311."

(D) "Meat packing work" means work slaughtering animals and processing and packaging meat products for sale and the rendering of animal byproducts.

(E) "Food processing work" means work handling or processing of any food in any manner of preparation for sale for an employer required to be licensed by the department of agriculture under chapter 69.07 RCW.

(d) Maintenance, janitorial, and food service workers at any facility treating patients diagnosed with the disease that is the subject of the public health emergency.

(e) Drivers and operators employed by a transit agency or any public entity authorized under state law to provide mass transportation services to the general public.

(f) Employees working at a childcare facility licensed by the department of children, youth, and families under chapter 43.216 RCW, if the employee has in-person interaction with children or other members of the general public as part of their job duties.

(g) Employees employed by a retail store that remains open to the general public during the public health emergency, if the employee has in-person interaction with the general public as part of their job duties. For the purposes of this section, "retail store" means a business whose North American industry classification code is within "44-45."

(h) Employees employed by a hotel, motel, or other transient accommodation licensed under chapter 70.62 RCW that remains open to the general public during the public health emergency, if the employee has in-person interaction with the general public as part of their job duties.

(i) Employees employed by a restaurant, if the employee has in-person interaction with the general public as part of their job duties or works in the kitchen of the restaurant and has in-person interaction with other employees. For the purposes of this section, "restaurant" has the same meaning as in RCW 66.04.010.

(j) Home care aides certified under RCW 18.88B and home health aides that provide services under chapter 70.126 RCW that primarily work in the home of the individual receiving care.

(k) (i) Corrections officers working at a correctional institution. (ii) For the purposes of this subsection:

(A) "Correctional institution" has the same meaning as RCW 9.94.049(1).

(B) "Corrections officer" means any corrections agency employee whose primary job function is to provide custody, safety, and security of prisoners in jails and detention facilities.

(l) Educational employees, including classroom teachers, paraeducators, principals, librarians, and other educational support staff, of any school district that are required to be physically present at a school where classes are being taught in-person, if the employee has in-person interaction with students or other employees as part of their job duties.

(m) Employees of institutions of higher education that are required to be physically present on campus when classes are being taught in-person, if the employee has in-person interaction with students or the general public as part of their job duties. For the purposes of this section, "institution of higher education" has the same meaning as in RCW 28B.10.016.

(2) "Public health emergency" means a declaration or order which covers the jurisdiction where the individual or business performs work concerning any dangerous, contagious, or infectious diseases, including a pandemic and is issued as follows:

(a) A declaration of a national or regional emergency has been issued by the president of the United States; or

(b) A state of emergency has been declared by the governor under RCW 43.06.010(12).

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 51.32 RCW to read as follows:

(1) For frontline employees who are covered under this title, there exists a prima facie presumption that any dangerous, contagious, or infectious diseases which are the subject of a public health emergency are occupational diseases under RCW 51.08.140 during a public health emergency.

(2) The frontline employee must provide verification, as required by the department by rule, to the department and the self-insured employer that the employee has contracted the disease that is the subject of the public health emergency.

(3) This presumption of occupational disease may be rebutted by clear and convincingevidence that:

(a) The exposure to the disease which is the subject of the public health emergency occurred from other employment or nonemployment activities; or

(b) The employee was working from the employee's home, on leave from the employee's employment, or some combination thereof, for a period of fourteen or more consecutive days immediately prior to the employee's injury, occupational disease, or period of incapacity resulted from exposure to the disease which is the subject of the public health emergency; or

(4) RCW 51.32.090 does not apply to an occupational disease under this section.

(5) (a) When a determination involving the presumption established in this section is appealed to the board of industrial insurance appeals and the final decision allows the claim of benefits, the board of industrial insurance appeals shall order that all reasonable costs of the appeal, including attorneys' fees and witness fees, be paid to the worker or the worker's beneficiary by the opposing party.

(b) When a determination involving the presumption established in this section is appealed to any court and the final decision allows the claim for benefits, the court shall order that all reasonable costs of appeal, including attorneys' fees and witness fees, be paid to the worker or the worker's beneficiary by the opposing party.

(c) When reasonable costs of the appeal must be paid by the department under this section in a state fund case, the costs shall be paid from the accident fund and charged to the costs of the claim.

(6) Costs of the payments under this section shall not affect the experience rating of employers insured by the state fund. These costs shall be paid from the accident fund.

(7) "Frontline employee" has the same meaning as in Section 1 of this act.

(8) "Public health emergency" has the same meaning as in Section 1 of this act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) Every employer must accommodate its employee's voluntary use of protective devices or equipment, including masks and gloves, as the employee deems necessary, during a public health emergency, provided:

(a) The use of these protective devices and equipment does not introduce hazards to the work environment and is consistent with the provisions of WAC 296-842-11005, as of the effective date of this section; and

(b) The use of facial coverings does not interfere with an employer's security requirements.

(2) If an employer requires their employees to wear personal protective equipment, such as gloves, goggles, face shields and face masks, the employer must provide the required equipment at no cost to the employees.

(3) An employer may not apply to the director, under RCW 49.17.080, for a temporary order granting a variance from this section.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) During a public health emergency, no person shall discharge or in any manner discriminate against any employee who:

(a) Raises a reasonable concern to the employer, the employer’s agent, other employees, the employee's family, a government agency, or to the public, including concerns raised through print, online, social, or any other media about infection control in the workplace of any disease that is the subject of the public health emergency; or

(b) Files any written notice or institutes or causes to be instituted any proceeding pursuant to section 8 of this act or has testified or is about to testify in any such proceeding.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) Upon complaint by an employee, the director must investigate to determine if there has been compliance with section 5 of this act. The director, upon complaint, may also initiate an investigation on behalf of one or more employees for violations of section 5 of this act. The director may require the testimony of witnesses and production of documents as part of an investigation.

(2) If the director determines that a violation occurred, the director shall attempt to resolve the violation by conference and conciliation.

(a) If no agreement is reached to resolve the violation, the director may issue a citation and notice of assessment and order the employer to pay to the complainant actual damages; statutory damages equal to the actual damages or five thousand dollars, whichever is greater; interest of one percent per month on all compensation owed; payment to the department of the costs of investigation and enforcement; and any other appropriate relief.

(b) In addition to the citation and notice of assessment, the director may order payment to the department of a civil penalty. For purposes of a civil penalty for violation of section 18 of this act, the violation as to each affected employee constitutes a separate violation.

(i) For a first violation, the civil penalty may not exceed five hundred dollars.

(ii) For a repeat violation, the civil penalty may not exceed one thousand dollars or ten percent of the damages, whichever is greater.

(3) An appeal from the director's determination may be taken in accordance with chapter 34.05 RCW. An employee who prevails is entitled to costs and reasonable attorneys' fees.

(4) The department must deposit civil penalties paid under this section in the supplemental pension fund established under RCW 51.44.033.

(5) Any wages and interest owed must be calculated from four years from the last violation before the complaint.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) An employee may bring a civil action against an employer for violation of section 5 of this act for actual damages; statutory damages equal to the actual damages or five thousand dollars, whichever is greater; interest of one percent per month on all compensation owed; and costs and reasonable attorneys' fees. The court may also order reinstatement and injunctive relief. The employee must bring a civil action within three years of the date of the alleged violation regardless of whether the employee pursued an administrative complaint. Filing a civil action under this section shall terminate the director's processing of the complaint under section 6 of this act. Recovery of any wages and interest owed must be calculated from four years from the last violation prior to the date of filing the civil action.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) (a) A person, on behalf of the department, and in the name of the department, may bring a whistleblower action in court for violations of section 5 of this act for any relief the department may pursue under section 6 of this act, including equitable relief, penalties, and any relief specified in rule. The granting of relief shall be subject to the same conditions and limitations that apply to the department, including any requirements for conference and conciliation and any conditions and limitations specified in rule, including penalty amounts. The action may allege multiple violations that have affected different employees aggrieved by the same employer. The relator must follow the procedures specified in subsection (2) of this section.

(b) A relator that prevails in a whistleblower action is entitled to an award of reasonable attorneys' fees and costs.

(c) No whistleblower action may be brought if the department, regarding the same facts as alleged in the whistleblower action, issued a citation or notice of assessment, determination of compliance, or otherwise resolved the complaint.

(d) A whistleblower action must be commenced within the same period of time that the department would have to take action based on the same set of alleged facts. The statute of limitations for bringing a whistleblower action is tolled from the date a relator files a notice with the department or the date the department commences an investigation.

(e) The requirements of Rule 23 of the superior court rules of civil procedure do not apply to a whistleblower action brought under this section.

(f) The right to bring a whistleblower action under this section may not be impaired by any private agreement.

(g) A whistleblower action is a public action and does not preclude a cause of action by an individual or individuals or operate as an estoppel for relief based on the same set of alleged facts, except that a court may not permit a double recovery.

(h) A person who is an employee of the entity alleged to have violated section 5 of this act may designate in writing a representative organization to initiate a whistleblower action on the person's behalf.

(2) (a) No action under subsection (1) of this section may be commenced before written notice of the claim has been submitted by the relator to the department, via online submission, and the relator has notified the employer by certified mail. The notice must be construed in the light most favorable to the relator, and must include the name, address, and contact information of the alleged violator; the name and contact information of the relator or the relator's legal counsel, should one exist; and a brief statement of the underlying claim.

(b) If the department intends to investigate the alleged violation, it must notify the relator and make a determination within one hundred eighty days of receiving the notice under subsection (1) of this section. If the department decides not to investigate the alleged violation, it must notify the relator within sixty business days of the date it receives the notification submitted by the relator. Upon receiving notice that the department does not intend to investigate or if the department does not make a determination within one hundred eighty days, the relator may commence a whistleblower action.

(c) As part of its investigation, the department may attempt to remedy the alleged violation through settlement. If the settlement obtained by the department provides the aggrieved employee or employees with a full remedy, including any interest owed, and the aggrieved employees receive payment in full prior to the end of the one hundred eighty-day investigation period, the department shall notify the relator that it will not commence an action and the settlement shall preclude further claims for the same wages or benefits paid in the settlement.

(d) If the department objects to being represented by a particular attorney proposed by the relator, the department may file an objection to the attorney general. Upon finding, after notice and hearing, that, based on the attorney's past conduct while representing a client or clients, the attorney does not meet the required professional standards of representatives, or, alternatively, if the attorney fails to zealously pursue the remedies available under this chapter, the attorney general may, within thirty days of receiving the objection, order that the whistleblower action may not be filed or maintained by the particular attorney on behalf of the relator.

(3) (a) The department may intervene in a whistleblower action and proceed with any and all claims in the action:

(i) As of right within thirty days after the filing of the whistleblower action;

(ii) For good cause shown, as determined by the court, after the expiration of the thirty-day period.

(b) If the department intervenes in a whistleblower action, the department shall have primary responsibility for litigating the action and shall not be bound by an act of the relator in bringing the action. If the department proposes to settle a whistleblower action, the department must give notice to the relator. If the department proposes to dismiss a whistleblower action, it must give notice to the relator and the relator must have an opportunity to be heard. The department may dismiss or settle the action if court determines that the dismissal or settlement is fair, adequate, reasonable, and in the public interest.

(c) If the department does not intervene, the relator shall have the right to litigate the action. The court must review and approve any settlement. The proposed settlement must be submitted to the department at the same time that it is submitted to the court, and the agency may present to the court its position on the proposed settlement or intervene as provided in subsection (a) of this section. The court shall approve a settlement only upon a determination that it is fair, adequate, reasonable, and in the public interest.

(d) Any settlement of a whistleblower action may not be confidential.

(4)(a) Penalty amounts recovered in a whistleblower action must be distributed as follows:

(i) If the department has not intervened, forty percent to the relator and sixty percent to the agency.

(ii) If the department has intervened, twenty percent to the relator and eighty percent to the agency.

(b) Amounts distributed to the department shall be used for enforcement of 49.17 RCW and education about the rights and obligations enforceable through this section by the agency.

(c) Damages recovered in a whistleblower action must be awarded to the department for distribution to aggrieved employees. The department may request the appointment of an administrative law judge or special master to assist in the distribution of the amounts.

(d) This section does not limit the department's right to seek restitution and damages, where available, for aggrieved employees as part of a whistleblower action in which it has intervened.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) During a public health emergency, an employer, within twenty-four hours of learning that ten percent or more of their employees at a workplace or worksite in this state have tested positive for the disease that is the subject of the public health emergency, or are ill with symptoms of the disease that is the subject of the public health emergency, must report the positive tests or illnesses to the department in a form prescribed by the department. The report may not include any employee names or personal identifying information.

(2) The department may use the reports in subsection (1) to identify potential clusters of infections at specific workplaces or industries and investigate workplaces for violations of chapter 49.17 RCW.

(3) This section does not require an employee to disclose any medical condition or diagnosis to their employer.

(4) This section does not alter or eliminate any other reporting obligations an employer has under state or federal law.

(5) For the purposes of this section:

(a) "Department" means the department of labor and industries.

(b) "Employer" means any person, firm, corporation, partnership, business trust, legal representative, or other business entity which engages in any business, industry, profession, or activity in this state and employs fifty or more employees.

**Sec.**  RCW 50A.15.010 and 2019 c 13 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

Employees are eligible for family and medical leave benefits as provided in this title after working for at least eight hundred twenty hours in employment during the qualifying period, except an employee is eligible for benefits after they have earned at least one thousand dollars in covered employment if their qualifying period includes a "public health emergency" as defined in Section 1 of this act.

**Sec.**  RCW 50A.15.020 and 2020 c 125 s 4 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) ((~~Beginning January 1, 2020, family~~)) Family and medical leave are available and benefits are payable to a qualified employee under this section.

(a) Following a waiting period consisting of the first seven consecutive calendar days, benefits are payable when family or medical leave is required. However, no waiting period is required for leave for the birth or placement of a child, or for leave because of any qualifying exigency as defined under RCW 50A.05.010(10)(c). The waiting period begins the previous Sunday of the week when an otherwise eligible employee takes leave for the minimum claim duration under subsection (2)(c) of this section. Eligible employees may satisfy the waiting period requirement while simultaneously receiving paid time off for any part of the waiting period.

(b) Benefits may continue during the continuance of the need for family or medical leave, subject to the maximum and minimum weekly benefits, duration, and other conditions and limitations established in this title.

(2) The weekly benefit shall be prorated by the percentage of hours on leave compared to the number of hours provided as the typical workweek hours as defined in RCW 50A.05.010.

(a) The benefits in this section, if not a multiple of one dollar, shall be reduced to the next lower multiple of one dollar.

(b) Hours on leave claimed for benefits under this title, if not a multiple of one hour, shall be reduced to the next lower multiple of one hour.

(c) The minimum claim duration payment is for eight consecutive hours of leave.

(3)(a) The maximum duration of paid family leave may not exceed twelve times the typical workweek hours during a period of fifty-two consecutive calendar weeks.

(b) The maximum duration of paid medical leave may not exceed twelve times the typical workweek hours during a period of fifty-two consecutive calendar weeks. This leave may be extended an additional two times the typical workweek hours if the employee experiences a serious health condition with a pregnancy that results in incapacity.

(c) An employee is not entitled to paid family and medical leave benefits under this title that exceeds a combined total of sixteen times the typical workweek hours. The combined total of family and medical leave may be extended to eighteen times the typical workweek hours if the employee experiences a serious health condition with a pregnancy that results in incapacity.

(4) The weekly benefit for family and medical leave shall be determined as follows: If the employee's average weekly wage is: (a) Equal to or less than one-half of the state average weekly wage, then the benefit amount is equal to ninety percent of the employee's average weekly wage; or (b) greater than one-half of the state average weekly wage, then the benefit amount is the sum of: (i) Ninety percent of one-half of the state average weekly wage; and (ii) fifty percent of the difference of the employee's average weekly wage and one-half of the state average weekly wage.

(5)(a) The maximum weekly benefit for family and medical leave that occurs on or after January 1, 2020, shall be one thousand dollars. By September 30, 2020, and by each subsequent September 30th, the commissioner shall adjust the maximum weekly benefit amount to ninety percent of the state average weekly wage. The adjusted maximum weekly benefit amount takes effect on the following January 1st.

(b) The minimum weekly benefit shall not be less than one hundred dollars per week except that if the employee's average weekly wage at the time of family or medical leave is less than one hundred dollars per week, the weekly benefit shall be the employee's full wage.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 50A.15 RCW to read as follows: The employment security department may adopt rules to implement the provisions of RCW 50A.15.010.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) In addition to the requirements of RCW 49.46.020, every employer shall provide its lower paid frontline employees with health emergency pay during a public health emergency. The health emergency pay is not required for hours of work performed when the employee is earning overtime pay.

(2) For the purpose of this section:

(a) "Lower paid frontline employees" means those employees who earn less than the state's minimum wage, plus one dollar, and who are frontline employees.

(b) "Health emergency pay" means an additional sum equal to twenty-five percent of the state's minimum wage, as established under RCW 46.49.020, that is added to the employee's pay for each hour worked.

(c) "State minimum wage" means the most recent minimum wage calculated under RCW 49.46.020.

**Sec.**  RCW 49.46.020 and 2019 c 236 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

(1)((~~(a) Beginning January 1, 2017, and until January 1, 2018, every employer shall pay to each of his or her employees who has reached the age of eighteen years wages at a rate of not less than eleven dollars per hour.~~

~~(b) Beginning January 1, 2018, and until January 1, 2019, every employer shall pay to each of his or her employees who has reached the age of eighteen years wages at a rate of not less than eleven dollars and fifty cents per hour.~~

~~(c) Beginning January 1, 2019, and until January 1, 2020, every employer shall pay to each of his or her employees who has reached the age of eighteen years wages at a rate of not less than twelve dollars per hour.~~

~~(d) Beginning January 1, 2020, and until January 1, 2021, every employer shall pay to each of his or her employees who has reached the age of eighteen years wages at a rate of not less than thirteen dollars and fifty cents per hour.~~

~~(2)~~ ))(a) Beginning on January 1, 2021, and each following January 1st as set forth under (b) of this subsection, every employer shall pay to each of his or her employees who has reached the age of eighteen years wages at a rate of not less than the amount established under (b) of this subsection.

(b) On September 30, 2020, and on each following September 30th, the department of labor and industries shall calculate an adjusted minimum wage rate to maintain employee purchasing power by increasing the current year's minimum wage rate by the rate of inflation. The adjusted minimum wage rate shall be calculated to the nearest cent using the consumer price index for urban wage earners and clerical workers, CPI-W, or a successor index, for the twelve months prior to each September 1st as calculated by the United States department of labor. Each adjusted minimum wage rate calculated under this subsection ((~~(2)(b)~~)) (1)(b) takes effect on the following January 1st.

((~~(3)~~))(2) An employer must pay to its employees: (a) All tips and gratuities; and (b) all service charges as defined under RCW 49.46.160 except those that, pursuant to RCW 49.46.160, are itemized as not being payable to the employee or employees servicing the customer. Tips and service charges paid to an employee are in addition to, and may not count towards, the employee's hourly minimum wage.

(4) ((~~Beginning January 1, 2018, except~~)) Except as provided in RCW 49.46.180, every employer must provide to each of its employees paid sick leave as provided in RCW 49.46.200 and 49.46.210.

(5) The director shall by regulation establish the minimum wage for employees under the age of eighteen years.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) In addition to the requirements of RCW 49.46.210, every employer shall provide each of its employees paid sick leave on an annual basis, in the amounts specified in subsection (2) of this section, during a public health emergency when:

(a) The employee is absent or unable to work or telework due to a need for leave because:

(i) The employee is subject to a federal, state, or local quarantine or isolation order related to the infectious disease;

(ii) The employee has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to the infectious disease; or

(iii) The employee is experiencing symptoms of the infectious disease and seeking a medical diagnosis;

(iv) The employee is caring for a family member who is subject to an order as described in (a)(i) of this subsection or has been advised as described in (a)(ii) of this subsection;

(c) The employee is caring for a child of the employee if the child's school or place of care has been closed, or the child's child care provider is unavailable, due to a public health emergency; or

(d) The employee is experiencing any other substantially similar condition specified by the United States department of health and human services or the Washington state department of health.

(2) The amount of hours of paid sick time to which an employee is entitled to under this section is:

(a) For full-time employees, eighty hours;

(b) For part-time employees, a number of hours equal to the number of hours that such employee works, on average, over a two-week period.

(3) Paid sick time under this section shall not carry over to a subsequent year.

(4) An employee is entitled to use the paid sick leave provided in this section with no restriction on the length of their employment.

(5) Employers are not prevented from providing more generous paid sick leave policies than provided in this section.

(6) This section does not require an employer to provide financial or other reimbursement for accrued and unused paid sick leave to any employee upon the employee's termination, resignation, retirement, or other separation from employment.

(7) The provisions of RCW 49.46.210(1) (f), (g), (h), and (i) apply equally to the paid sick leave under this section.

(8) For the purpose of this section, "family member" has the same meaning as in RCW 49.46.210.

**Sec.**  RCW 49.46.210 and 2019 c 236 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) ((~~Beginning January 1, 2018, except~~)) Except as provided in RCW 49.46.180, every employer shall provide each of its employees paid sick leave as follows:

(a) An employee shall accrue at least one hour of paid sick leave for every forty hours worked as an employee. An employer may provide paid sick leave in advance of accrual provided that such front-loading meets or exceeds the requirements of this section for accrual, use, and carryover of paid sick leave.

(b) An employee is authorized to use paid sick leave for the following reasons:

(i) An absence resulting from an employee's mental or physical illness, injury, or health condition; to accommodate the employee's need for medical diagnosis, care, or treatment of a mental or physical illness, injury, or health condition; or an employee's need for preventive medical care;

(ii) To allow the employee to provide care for a family member with a mental or physical illness, injury, or health condition; care of a family member who needs medical diagnosis, care, or treatment of a mental or physical illness, injury, or health condition; or care for a family member who needs preventive medical care; and

(iii) When the employee's place of business has been closed by order of a public official for any health-related reason, or when an employee's child's school or place of care has been closed for such a reason.

(c) An employee is authorized to use paid sick leave for absences that qualify for leave under the domestic violence leave act, chapter 49.76 RCW.

(d) An employee is entitled to use accrued paid sick leave beginning on the ninetieth calendar day after the commencement of his or her employment.

(e) Employers are not prevented from providing more generous paid sick leave policies or permitting use of paid sick leave for additional purposes.

(f) An employer may require employees to give reasonable notice of an absence from work, so long as such notice does not interfere with an employee's lawful use of paid sick leave.

(g) For absences exceeding three days, an employer may require verification that an employee's use of paid sick leave is for an authorized purpose. If an employer requires verification, verification must be provided to the employer within a reasonable time period during or after the leave. An employer's requirements for verification may not result in an unreasonable burden or expense on the employee and may not exceed privacy or verification requirements otherwise established by law.

(h) An employer may not require, as a condition of an employee taking paid sick leave, that the employee search for or find a replacement worker to cover the hours during which the employee is on paid sick leave.

(i) For each hour of paid sick leave used, an employee shall be paid the greater of the minimum hourly wage rate established in this chapter or his or her normal hourly compensation. The employer is responsible for providing regular notification to employees about the amount of paid sick leave available to the employee.

(j) Unused paid sick leave carries over to the following year, except that an employer is not required to allow an employee to carry over paid sick leave in excess of forty hours.

(k) This section does not require an employer to provide financial or other reimbursement for accrued and unused paid sick leave to any employee upon the employee's termination, resignation, retirement, or other separation from employment. When there is a separation from employment and the employee is rehired within twelve months of separation by the same employer, whether at the same or a different business location of the employer, previously accrued unused paid sick leave shall be reinstated and the previous period of employment shall be counted for purposes of determining the employee's eligibility to use paid sick leave under subsection (1)(d) of this section.

(2) For purposes of this section, "family member" means any of the following:

(a) A child, including a biological, adopted, or foster child, stepchild, or a child to whom the employee stands in loco parentis, is a legal guardian, or is a de facto parent, regardless of age or dependency status;

(b) A biological, adoptive, de facto, or foster parent, stepparent, or legal guardian of an employee or the employee's spouse or registered domestic partner, or a person who stood in loco parentis when the employee was a minor child;

(c) A spouse;

(d) A registered domestic partner;

(e) A grandparent;

(f) A grandchild; or

(g) A sibling.

(3) An employer may not adopt or enforce any policy that counts the use of paid sick leave time as an absence that may lead to or result in discipline against the employee.

(4) An employer may not discriminate or retaliate against an employee for his or her exercise of any rights under this chapter including the use of paid sick leave.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) In addition to the requirements of RCW 49.46.210 and section 15 of this act, every employer, with fifty or more employees, shall provide each of its employees twelve weeks of emergency child care leave on an annual basis, in the amounts specified in subsection (2) of this section, during a public health emergency when the employee is absent or unable to work or telework when the employee is caring for a child of the employee because the child's school or place of care has been closed, or the child's child care provider is unavailable, due to a public health emergency. For the purposes of this section, a school is closed when the school does not allow the child to physically attend class in-person for the full day.

(2)(a) The first ten days of leave taken under this section shall be unpaid leave; however, the employee may substitute any paid time off offered by an employer under the employer's established policy.

(b) For each hour of emergency child care leave that is paid leave under this section, an employee shall be paid at least two-thirds of the employee's normal hourly compensation or salary, not to exceed two hundred dollars per day or an aggregate of ten thousand dollars annually.

(3) Emergency child care leave under this section shall not carry over to a subsequent year.

(4) An employee is entitled to use the emergency child care leave provided in this section after ninety days of employment with the employer, with no restriction on the minimum number of hours worked.

(5) Employers are not prevented from providing more generous paid leave policies than provided in this section.

(6) This section does not require an employer to provide financial or other reimbursement for accrued and unused emergency child care leave to any employee upon the employee's termination, resignation, retirement, or other separation from employment.

(7)(a) An employer may require employees to give reasonable notice of an absence from work, so long as such notice does not interfere with an employee's lawful use of emergency child care leave.

(b) For absences exceeding three days, an employer may require verification that an employee's use of emergency child care leave is for an authorized purpose. If an employer requires verification, verification must be provided to the employer within a reasonable time period during or after the leave. An employer's requirements for verification may not result in an unreasonable burden or expense on the employee and may not exceed privacy or verification requirements otherwise established by law.

(c) An employer may not require, as a condition of an employee taking emergency child care leave, that the employee search for or find a replacement worker to cover the hours during which the employee is on paid leave.

(d) The employer is responsible for providing regular notification to employees about the amount of emergency child care leave available to the employee.

(8) An employer may not adopt or enforce any policy that counts the use of emergency child care leave time as an absence that may lead to or result in discipline against the employee.

(9) An employer may not discriminate or retaliate against an employee for the employee's exercise of any rights under this chapter including the use of emergency child care leave.

(10) For the purpose of this section:

(a) "Child care provider" means a provider who receives compensation for providing child care services on a regular basis, including an eligible child care provider as defined in 42 U.S.C. 9858n, as of the effective date of this section.

(b) "Child of the employee" is a child under the age of eighteen and includes a biological, adopted, or foster child, a stepchild, a child's spouse, or a child to whom the employee stands in loco parentis, is a legal guardian, or is a de facto parent.

(c) "School" has the same meaning as in RCW 28A.210.070.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 82.04 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Beginning July 1, 2021, a credit against the tax due under this chapter is allowed for any employer who meets the public health emergency paid sick or childcare leave requirements under sections 15 and 17 of this act. The credit is equal to the full amount of wages paid by the employer in qualifying public health emergency paid sick or childcare leave in the previous calendar quarter as reported to the employment security department and provided in this section.

(2) A credit under this section may not be claimed if a federal tax credit is available for wages paid under the same qualifying public health emergency.

(3) The credit under this section may be used against any tax due under this chapter and may be carried forward to future reporting periods for a maximum of one year. No refunds may be granted for credits under this section.

(4) Credits earned under this section may be claimed only on returns filed electronically with the department using the department's online tax filing service or other method of electronic reporting as the department may authorize. No application is required to claim the credit, but the taxpayer must keep records necessary for the department to determine eligibility under this section.

(5) No person may claim a credit against taxes due under both this chapter and chapter 82.16 RCW for amounts paid toward the same qualifying public health emergency sick or childcare leave hours.

(7) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(a) "Public health emergency" has the same meaning as in section 1 of this act.

(b) "Qualifying public health emergency" means any public health emergency in which an employer is required to provide paid sick or childcare leave to its employees as provided in sections 15 and 17 of this act.

(c) "Qualifying wages" means any wages paid by an employer in which a credit may be claimed under this section.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 82.16 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Beginning July 1, 2021, a credit against the tax due under this chapter is allowed for any employer who meets the public health emergency paid sick or childcare leave requirements under sections 15 and 17 of this act. The credit is equal to the full amount of wages paid by the employer in qualifying public health emergency paid sick or childcare leave in the previous calendar quarter as provided in this section.

(2) A credit under this section may not be claimed if a federal tax credit is available for wages paid under the same qualifying public health emergency.

(3) The credit under this section may be used against any tax due under this chapter and may be carried forward to future reporting periods for a maximum of one year. No refunds may be granted for credits under this section.

(4) Credits earned under this section may be claimed only on returns filed electronically with the department using the department's online tax filing service or other method of electronic reporting as the department may authorize. No application is required to claim the credit, but the taxpayer must keep records necessary for the department to determine eligibility under this section.

(5) No person may claim a credit against taxes due under both this chapter and chapter 82.04 RCW for amounts paid toward the same qualifying public health emergency sick or childcare leave hours.

(7) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(a) "Public health emergency" has the same meaning as in section 1 of this act.

(b) "Qualifying public health emergency" means any public health emergency in which an employer is required to provide paid sick or childcare leave to its employees as provided in sections 15 and 17 of this act.

(c) "Qualifying wages" means any wages paid by an employer in which a credit may be claimed under this section.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The provisions of RCW 82.32.805 and 82.32.808 do not apply to sections 18 and 19 of this act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The department of labor and industries may adopt rules to implement the provisions of sections 4, 9, 13, 15, and 17 of this act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) Sections 1, 4 through 9, 13, 15, 17, and 21 of this act constitute a new chapter in Title 49 RCW.

(2) This chapter may be known and cited as the health emergency labor standards act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately.