

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 1024 (Menjivar) – As Amended May 14, 2026

Policy Committee:	Labor and Employment	Vote:	7 - 0
	Public Employment and Retirement		6 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill provides firefighters, as defined, with fully paid postpartum and recovery leave, among other things.

Specifically, the bill provides 26 weeks of fully paid postpartum and recovery leave, at the employee's regular rate of pay, to a firefighter who, after 20 weeks of gestation, gives birth, has a still birth, or has a miscarriage if they have at least 1,250 hours of service with the fire department within the previous 12 months before the date of the birth or miscarriage.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Cal FIRE anticipates ongoing costs (General Fund) associated with providing this expanded benefit to firefighters but asserts it is unable to quantify these costs because it cannot reliably predict how many employees will utilize this benefit in a given year. Nonetheless, the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR) estimates the bill likely results in ongoing annual costs in the hundreds of thousands of dollars for eligible Bargaining Unit 8 state employees working at Cal FIRE. However, to the extent that the extended leave provided by the bill results in more female firefighters returning to work instead of abandoning firefighting employment due to insufficient leave time the cost savings from reduced recruitment and training of new firefighters could lower total costs.
- 2) Ongoing General Fund costs of \$400,000 annually for the Labor Commissioner's Office (under the Department of Industrial Relations) to facilitate the creation of a parental leave program.
- 3) Ongoing costs in the tens of thousands to low hundreds of thousands of dollars (General Fund) for the University of California for campuses with fire departments to provide this expanded benefit.
- 4) No fiscal effect to the California State University (CSU) as CSU is protected by local city and county fire departments, not firefighters directly employed by the CSU.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

While still low, California has the highest number of women firefighters in the United States, yet there is no policy on the books

that ensures paid postpartum and recovery leave for those who give birth. The absence of this paid leave either pushes firefighters to return to work before fully healing or leave the service completely. Unfortunately for many, they end up leaving. Over decades, significant effort has been dedicated towards ensuring that a career in the fire service is accessible to all who want to join and that fire departments represent the communities they serve. A critical piece of that effort is ensuring that all who join can stay. By ensuring firefighters who give birth receive 26 weeks of fully paid leave, [this bill] promotes fair, accessible, and sustainable careers in the fire service.

- 2) **Background.** In general, while firefighters are eligible for family and medical leave in the case of birth or miscarriage under the Federal Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or the California Family Rights Act (CFRA), both types of leave are unpaid as firefighters do not pay into state disability insurance. Proponents of this bill argue that this lack of fully paid leave for postpartum and recovering firefighters is a direct disincentive to taking adequate time off post-birth or miscarriage. Additionally, this bill provides that the expanded leave provided does not require an employee to exhaust their existing leave, further eliminating potential disincentives to taking additional recovery leave time.
- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 126 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 65, Statutes of 2026, provides additional funding through the Local Control Funding Formula to K-12 local educational agencies to cover the cost of providing employees with up to 14 weeks of paid pregnancy disability leave.

AB 65 (Aguiar-Curry), of the current legislative session, requires K-12 public schools and community college districts to provide up to 14 weeks of paid leave for employees experiencing pregnancy, miscarriage, childbirth, termination of pregnancy, or recovery from those conditions. AB 65 was set for hearing in the Senate Education Committee, but the hearing was canceled at the request of the author.

Analysis Prepared by: Aaron Heredia / APPR. / (916) 319-2081