

# STATE OF NEW YORK

5218

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

## IN SENATE

February 26, 2021

Introduced by Sens. PARKER, BAILEY, BRESLIN, HOYLMAN, KENNEDY, SANDERS  
-- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to  
the Committee on Labor

AN ACT to amend the labor law, in relation to the entitlement to unpaid  
leave of absence from employment for victims of domestic violence

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assem-  
bly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. The labor law is amended by adding a new article 19-D to  
2 read as follows:

### ARTICLE 19-D

#### UNPAID LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR

#### VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

#### Section 696. Definitions.

696-a. Entitlement to leave.

696-b. Leave taken intermittently or on reduced leave schedule.

696-c. Notice of intention to take leave.

696-d. Certification.

696-e. Confidentiality.

696-f. Restoration to position.

696-g. Prohibited acts.

696-h. Civil action.

696-i. Savings clause.

#### § 696. Definitions. As used in this article:

1. "Victim of domestic or sexual abuse" shall mean a victim of domes-  
tic violence, a sex offense, or stalking.

2. "Victim of domestic violence" shall mean an individual who is a  
victim of an act which would constitute a family offense pursuant to  
subdivision one of section eight hundred twelve of the family court act.

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets  
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 3. "Victim of a sex offense" shall mean a victim of an act or acts  
2 that would constitute a violation of article one hundred thirty of the  
3 penal law.

4 4. "Victim of stalking" shall mean a victim of an act or acts that  
5 would constitute a violation of section 120.45, 120.50, 120.55 or 120.60  
6 of the penal law.

7 5. "Employee" shall mean a person who is employed for at least twelve  
8 months for not less than one thousand base hours during the immediately  
9 preceding twelve month period.

10 6. "Employer" shall mean a person or corporation, partnership, indi-  
11 vidual proprietorship, joint venture, firm or company, or other similar  
12 legal entity which engages the services of an employee and employs twen-  
13 ty-five or more employees for each working day during each of twenty or  
14 more calendar work weeks in the then current or immediately preceding  
15 calendar year. "Employer" includes the state, any political subdivision  
16 thereof, and all public offices, agencies, boards or bodies.

17 § 696-a. Entitlement to leave. Any employee of an employer in the  
18 state who is a victim of domestic or sexual violence shall be eligible  
19 for twenty days of unpaid leave from their employment during any twelve  
20 month period in order to address domestic or sexual violence or ongoing  
21 effects of such domestic or sexual violence, including but not limited  
22 to:

23 1. seeking medical attention for, or recovering or taking care of the  
24 victim's child while the child recovers from, any physical or psycholog-  
25 ical injuries caused by the domestic or sexual violence; or

26 2. attending counseling sessions for the victim of domestic or sexual  
27 violence or for such victim's child in order to deal with the effects of  
28 the domestic or sexual violence; or

29 3. seeking legal assistance including attending court proceedings or  
30 meeting or communicating with an attorney or a member of law enforce-  
31 ment; or

32 4. seeking services for the victim of domestic or sexual violence or  
33 for such victim's child from a residential or non-residential program  
34 for victims of domestic or sexual violence; or

35 5. engaging in safety planning, including arranging to relocate and  
36 relocating to a temporary or permanent new residence, in order to  
37 decrease the risk of future domestic or sexual violence.

38 § 696-b. Leave taken intermittently or on reduced leave schedule. The  
39 leave pursuant to section six hundred ninety-six-a of this article may  
40 be taken on a reduced leave schedule or intermittently if the employee  
41 and employer agree on the schedule. Taking leave on a reduced leave or  
42 intermittent schedule shall not result in a reduction in the amount of  
43 total leave a victim of domestic or sexual violence is entitled to in  
44 the twelve month period.

45 § 696-c. Notice of intention to take leave. An employee shall provide  
46 an employer with reasonable notice of the employee's intention to take  
47 leave pursuant to section six hundred ninety-six-a of this article  
48 unless providing such notice is not practicable. When an unscheduled  
49 absence occurs, the employer may not take any action against the employ-  
50 ee if the employee, within a reasonable period of time after the  
51 absence, provides certification as set forth in section six hundred  
52 ninety-six-d of this article.

53 § 696-d. Certification. In order to determine whether the employee is  
54 a victim of domestic or sexual violence, the employer may require that  
55 the request for leave be supported by one of the following:

1 1. a sworn statement submitted by the victim of domestic or sexual  
2 violence describing such victim's need for leave to address the ongoing  
3 effects of domestic or sexual violence; or

4 2. any documentation of the domestic or sexual violence, including  
5 police reports, court records, statements from a shelter worker, law  
6 enforcement officer, medical worker, counselor, clergy member, attorney  
7 or any other professional from whom the employee has sought assistance  
8 to address the domestic or sexual violence and its effects; or

9 3. any other corroborating evidence including physical evidence,  
10 photographs, or statements from other individuals who are aware of the  
11 domestic or sexual violence and its effects.

12 § 696-e. Confidentiality. Any information provided to the employer,  
13 including but not limited to information under section six hundred nine-  
14 ty-six-d of this article, describing the domestic or sexual violence in  
15 the employee's life and the request to take a leave to address the  
16 effects of domestic or sexual violence, shall be kept confidential by  
17 the employer. Disclosure shall only be allowed if the employee, in  
18 writing, consents to or requests disclosure.

19 § 696-f. Restoration to position. 1. Any employee who takes leave  
20 under section six hundred ninety-six-a of this article, shall be enti-  
21 tled to return from such leave and be restored to the same position held  
22 by such employee when the leave began or be restored to an equivalent  
23 position with equivalent benefits, pay and other terms and conditions of  
24 employment.

25 2. The taking of leave under section six hundred ninety-six-a of this  
26 article shall not result in the loss of any employment benefits accrued  
27 prior to the date on which the leave began.

28 3. (a) Except as provided in subdivision two of this section, any  
29 employee who takes leave under section six hundred ninety-six-a of this  
30 article shall be entitled to continued coverage under any health care  
31 benefits plan provided by such person's employer for the duration of the  
32 leave.

33 (b) The employer may recover the premium that the employer paid for  
34 maintaining coverage under a health benefits plan for the employee enti-  
35 tled to leave under section six hundred ninety-six-a of this article,  
36 if:

37 (i) the employee fails to return to such person's employment once the  
38 leave has expired; and

39 (ii) the employee fails to return to work for a reason other than:

40 (A) the continuation, recurrence, or onset of domestic or sexual  
41 violence that entitles the employee to leave pursuant to this section;  
42 or

43 (B) other circumstances beyond the control of the employee.

44 § 696-g. Prohibited acts. 1. Interference with rights.

45 (a) Exercise of rights. It shall be unlawful for any employer to  
46 interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of or the attempt to  
47 exercise any right provided under this article.

48 (b) Employer discrimination. It shall be unlawful for any employer to  
49 discharge or harass any individual, or otherwise discriminate against  
50 any individual with respect to compensation, terms, conditions, or priv-  
51 ileges of employment of the individual (including retaliation in any  
52 form or manner) because the individual exercised any right provided  
53 under this article or opposed any practice made unlawful by this arti-  
54 cle.

55 2. Interference with proceedings or inquiries. It shall be unlawful  
56 for any person to discharge or in any other manner discriminate (as

1 described in paragraph (b) of subdivision one of this section) against  
2 any individual because such individual:

3 (a) has filed any charge, or has instituted or caused to be instituted  
4 any proceeding, under or related to this article;

5 (b) has given, or is about to give, any information in connection with  
6 any inquiry or proceeding relating to any right provided under this  
7 article; or

8 (c) has testified, or is about to testify, in any inquiry or proceed-  
9 ing relating to any right provided under this article.

10 § 696-h. Civil action. 1. By employee. Any person denied leave or  
11 benefits due under this article or aggrieved by an action made unlawful  
12 by this article shall have a cause of action in any court of appropriate  
13 jurisdiction for damages, including any wages, salary, employment bene-  
14 fits or other compensation denied or lost to such individual by reasons  
15 of the violation and/or any actual monetary losses sustained by the  
16 individual as a direct result of the violation, as well as interest on  
17 such amount calculated at the prevailing rate, and such equitable relief  
18 as may be appropriate, including employment, reinstatement, and  
19 promotion, together with costs and such reasonable attorneys' fees as  
20 may be allowed by the court, and if the violation was willful, an addi-  
21 tional amount as liquidated damages equal to twenty-five percent of the  
22 total of such damages found to be due.

23 2. By commissioner. On behalf of any employee denied leave or benefits  
24 due under this article or aggrieved by an action made unlawful by this  
25 article, the industrial commissioner may bring a legal action necessary  
26 to collect damages due to the violation, and the employer shall be  
27 required to pay such damages and if such violation was willful, an addi-  
28 tional amount as liquidated damages equal to twenty-five percent of the  
29 total of such damages found to be due.

30 3. Limitation of time. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an  
31 action to recover upon liability imposed by this article must be  
32 commenced within two years.

33 § 696-i. Savings clause. If any provision of this article or the  
34 application thereof to any person, employer, occupation or circumstance  
35 is held invalid, the remainder of the article and the application of  
36 such provision to other persons, employees, occupations, or circum-  
37 stances shall not be affected thereby.

38 § 2. This act shall take effect on the ninetieth day after it shall  
39 have become a law.