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              WASHINGTON STATE EMPLOYMENT SECURITY DEPARTMENT
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 4 PFML Phase 4 Formal Rules Hearing
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                          PUBLIC COMMENTS HEARING
11
                          Wednesday, May 29, 2019
12
                           9:04 a.m. - 9:27 a.m.
                        322 North Spokane Falls Court
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                           Spokane, Washington
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                            CERTIFIED COPY
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    REPORTED BY:
25 RACHAEL L. HALL, CCR NO. 3265
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    APPEARANCES:
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    FOR THE EMPLOYMENT SECURITY DEPARTMENT:
 3
            MS. APRIL AMUNDSON
            MR. JASON BARRETT
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SPOKANE, WASHINGTON, MAY 29, 2019, 9:04 A.M.
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          MR. BARRETT: Pursuant to the authority given
 4
     under Washington State Law RCW 50A.04.215, Chapter 42.30
 5
     RCW of the Open Public Meetings Act and Chapter 34.05 of
 6
     the Administrative Procedures Act, this hearing is
 7
     hereby convened.
          For the record, this hearing is being held at
 8
 9
     9:04 a.m. on May 29th, 2019 at the DoubleTree by Hilton
10
     Hotel located at 322 Spokane Falls Court in Spokane,
11
     Washington.
12
          This hearing is convened to consider testimony
13
     concerning Phase 4 of Paid Family and Medical Leave
14
     rulemaking. Rules in this phase relate to the
15
     continuation of benefits, fraud and other topics related
16
     to establishing a program. Notice of this hearing was
17
     filed in the Washington State Register on March 13th,
18
     2019 as WSR 19-07-035. It was sent to interested
19
     parties and was posted online.
20
          My name is Jason Barrett and I'm a policy analyst
21
     for the Paid Family and Medical Leave Division of the
2.2
     Washington State Employment Security Department.
23
     represent Commissioner Suzi LeVine as the hearing
24
     officer presiding at this public rulemaking hearing.
          We have another staff member from the Paid Family
25
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- 1 and Medical Leave Policy Team attending this hearing and
- 2 I will let her introduce herself now.
- 3 MS. AMUNDSON: Thank you for attending today. My
- 4 name is April Amundson. I'm the rules and policy
- 5 manager for Paid Family and Medical Leave. Thank you
- 6 again for attending.
- 7 MR. BARRETT: Please be advised that this hearing
- 8 is being transcribed by a court reporter, and the
- 9 transcript will become a part of the official rulemaking
- 10 file. To facilitate this transcription, please state
- 11 and then spell your name before you give testimony.
- 12 Please also note that this hearing is convened to
- 13 consider comments on the proposed rules.
- Because of the formal nature of the hearing, we are
- 15 unlikely to answer any questions you may ask. If you do
- 16 pose a question, I will ask you to rephrase your
- 17 question as a comment. Questions can also be sent to
- 18 our online portal, which is managed by the policy team.
- 19 It can be found by typing bit.ly/commentforum into your
- 20 browser window.
- 21 A concise, explanatory statement of the agency's
- 22 reason for adoption of the rules, including a summary
- 23 and response to all comments received after the
- 24 publication of the proposed rules, will be placed in the
- 25 permanent rulemaking file and posted online. This



- 1 document will be sent to all interested parties who have
- 2 signed up to receive Paid Family and Medical Leave
- 3 e-mails.
- 4 We will begin this morning with April Amundson who
- 5 will provide a brief explanation of the proposal.
- 6 MS. AMUNDSON: Thank you, Jason.
- 7 The Paid Family and Medical Leave Act was passed by
- 8 Washington state legislature in 2017. January 1st,
- 9 2019, employers were able to start assessing premiums on
- 10 employees' wages. Application for benefits will be
- 11 accepted beginning January 1, 2020. They have split the
- 12 rulemaking into phases to align with this aggressive,
- 13 but achievable schedule. This formal public hearing
- 14 covers the continuation of benefits, fraud and other
- 15 topics related to the establishment of this program, as
- 16 Jason mentioned moments ago.
- 17 The rules that we're covering today span several
- 18 different topics including at a high level how the
- 19 department will determine whether an employee is
- 20 eligible to receive benefits on an ongoing basis. What
- 21 happens if an employee's eligibility for benefits is
- 22 disputed, how frequently employees must file to receive
- 23 benefits, what information the department needs to
- 24 determine a claim as well as how an employee can reopen
- 25 or cancel a claim.



- 1 In addition, these draft rules contain information
- 2 about what wages are reportable to the department for
- 3 premium assessment and how the department will determine
- 4 fraud. The rules also contain several definitions that
- 5 will pertain to all Paid Family and Medical Leave rules.
- I encourage you to read the text of the rules for a
- 7 more robust understanding. These draft rules are
- 8 intended to interpret and clarify the Title 50A of the
- 9 Revised Code of Washington.
- 10 Thank you for your interest and participation in
- 11 our rulemaking efforts to implement this important
- 12 program and we look forward to your comments today.
- MR. BARRETT: We will now hear testimony from those
- 14 in attendance. When you testify, please speak into the
- 15 microphone or phone, state your name, spell your last
- 16 name and state who you represent if you are here in a
- 17 representative capacity. Please unmute your phone or
- 18 step forward to the microphone and testify whenever you
- 19 are ready.
- We are now accepting comments for those joining us
- 21 here in the room or by phone on Phase 4 of Paid Family
- 22 and Medical Leave rulemaking.
- MS. ROBERTSON: Marjorie Robertson from Sun Life.
- 24 Are you going --
- MR. BARRETT: Marjorie, I'm so sorry to interrupt.



- 1 Can you just spell your last name for our court
- 2 reporter.
- 3 MS. ROBERTSON: I'm sorry, what?
- 4 MR. BARRETT: Can you please spell your last name
- 5 for our court reporter?
- 6 MS. ROBERTSON: Sure. It's R-o-b-e-r-t-s-o-n.
- 7 This is on the phone so it's a little hard to tell
- 8 what's happening. Are you going through the regulations
- 9 number by number, or are you just inviting general
- 10 comments?
- MR. BARRETT: We're inviting general comments, so
- 12 if you have a comment on any of the rules in Phase 4,
- 13 you may provide that comment at this time.
- MS. ROBERTSON: Okay. Yes, I do. I have guestions
- 15 almost more than I have comments, which I know you are
- 16 not -- you may not answer them, but I found the
- 17 references to the continued claim, successive claim,
- 18 weekly claim, sometimes it's four consecutive weeks
- 19 where there's a problem, and then the statute is a
- 20 four-month gap. I found all of that very confusing, so
- 21 I had a series of questions about does an employee have
- 22 to file a weekly claim, which I heard is the ESD's
- 23 position, and I'm confused by that because I don't see
- 24 that requirement in the statute.
- Intuitively, it doesn't make any sense to me



- 1 because, typically, an employee may get approved for
- 2 eight weeks of continuous leave, so if they submit the
- 3 medical certification -- you know, the way that works
- 4 under the FMLA, that's your claim. It didn't make sense
- 5 to me that an employee would have to file a weekly
- 6 claim.
- 7 And then I didn't know how the minimum claim
- 8 duration worked. Does that eight consecutive hours have
- 9 to be met each week before an employee can be paid, and
- 10 once they meet that eight consecutive hours, can they
- 11 take leave in any minimum increment they want, or is
- 12 there a minimum increment of intermittent leave?
- And then there's a regulation that talks about how
- 14 an employee must reopen a claim if it's -- for anything
- 15 within the same claim year, so that almost implies
- 16 there's only ever one claim that exists for any reason
- 17 during the benefit year. So I found that confusing.
- 18 So if you can tell, I'm confused. I set these
- 19 questions forth a little bit better in the written
- 20 questions I submitted, but I did have some overall
- 21 confusion about what claims -- if there are different
- 22 kinds of claims, are there continued claims because it
- 23 doesn't really define -- anyway, I'm rambling on.
- MR. BARRETT: So, Marjorie, thank you so much for
- 25 your comment. You're saying that the department could



- 1 possibly do a little bit better in terms of
- 2 communicating the types of claims, the frequency of
- 3 claims and how minimum claim duration works.
- 4 Is that accurate?
- 5 MS. ROBERTSON: It would be great for me because I
- 6 think I'm not understanding it, but I also would be
- 7 interested if it's possible to have a dialogue
- 8 about -- I don't know if you've already made up your
- 9 mind about what makes sense. I will tell you that from
- 10 a voluntary plan point of view, I am an insurer and we
- 11 have talked with some other insurers and if we do a
- 12 voluntary plan, we are probably not going to require
- 13 employees to file weekly claims because it just seems
- 14 like too much administrative work. So if that's what
- 15 you're thinking is necessary, that feels like you're
- 16 going to be creating extra work for yourself that maybe
- 17 you don't need.
- MR. BARRETT: Well, we certainly appreciate that
- 19 feedback, and, perhaps, Marjorie, we can have a
- 20 discussion offline to hopefully clarify some issues that
- 21 are causing confusion, and we will also make a point to
- 22 speak with our communication staff to ensure that this
- 23 information, once it becomes publicly available, is very
- 24 clear about the types of claims required and hopefully
- 25 address these concerns that you have.



- 1 MS. ROBERTSON: That's fabulous, thank you. I
- 2 don't mean to complain.
- MR. BARRETT: We're here to hear complaints as much
- 4 as compliments, so we appreciate it.
- 5 MS. RUTLEDGE: Hi. This is Gina Rutledge,
- 6 R-u-t-l-e-d-q-e. I also had questions on that same part
- 7 because in -- for the most part in applying for
- 8 benefits, you get 12 weeks, but most of us know that
- 9 pregnancy leading into child bonding is probably our
- 10 biggest event that we're going to see.
- 11 So examples of how that claim year will work with
- 12 how it goes to 16 weeks and then 18 weeks would be very
- important for us to understand. When would the own
- 14 medical end and when would the child bonding claims
- 15 begin? Would someone be required to file two separate
- 16 claims, one for benefits for the medical and one for the
- 17 paid family. How do they qualify for the 18 weeks?
- I mean, if someone, you know, had a medical issue
- 19 at all during the year, you know, there was a
- 20 complication to the pregnancy, maybe morning sickness
- 21 that really hit, does that automatically qualify them
- 22 for 18 weeks? So a little bit more explanation on that
- 23 would be very helpful. So when the two benefits blend
- together from pregnancy and cement, even when they blend
- 25 together for something completely different, how would



- 1 someone qualify for the 16 weeks? Would that be one
- 2 benefit with the state or would that be considered two?
- 3 MR. BARRETT: Great. Thank you so much, Gina. And
- 4 I do absolutely understand the confusion around how
- 5 claims work together, and I do want to point out our
- 6 communications team is putting together a very extensive
- 7 set of informational documents and Web pages and
- 8 employee tool kits that will be available later this
- 9 year that will hopefully address a lot of these
- 10 concerns, but we do appreciate hearing them.
- 11 MS. RUTLEDGE: Thank you. Will there be a paper
- 12 claim or is this all going to be done online or through
- 13 the telephone?
- MS. AMUNDSON: That has not been developed yet.
- 15 We're looking at it online, primarily, and then paper as
- 16 necessary, but the documents have not yet been
- 17 developed.
- 18 MS. RUTLEDGE: Thank you. And I appreciate your
- 19 time.
- 20 MS. AMUNDSON: Thank you.
- 21 MR. BARRETT: We are now accepting further comments
- for those joining us in the room on Phase 4 of Paid
- 23 Family and Medical Leave.
- MS. O'CONNELL: This is Abigail O'Connell from
- 25 Sun Life. My last name is spelled O, apostrophe,



- 1 C-o-n-n-e-l-l. And I am confused about the application
- 2 of the minimum claim period of eight consecutive hours.
- 3 I'm wondering after the employee hits the eight
- 4 consecutive hours, are they then allowed to take
- 5 increments of time in less than eight-hour segments?
- 6 MR. BARRETT: So because we are in a formal
- 7 hearing, and we do need to accept comments in the form
- 8 of feedback rather than questions, I would like to
- 9 recommend that we rephrase your comment to suggest that
- 10 the department could offer some clarity on that issue.
- MS. O'CONNELL: Sure. I guess I need to rephrase.
- 12 I'm confused about the application of the minimum
- increment once the eight consecutive hours has been
- 14 taken. And I'd like clarity on that eventually, and
- 15 that's my comment.
- 16 MR. BARRETT: Thank you, Abigail. We appreciate
- 17 that. The floor is open for any further comments.
- MS. RUTLEDGE: Hi. This is Gina Rutledge again,
- 19 R-u-t-l-e-d-g-e. The regulations do allow employees to
- 20 file late. Is there going to be a time frame when
- 21 those, you know, late payments can be submitted? Like,
- 22 30 days or, you know, six months or something to that
- 23 effect would be nice. I mean, you've got the -- we
- 24 could file at least 30 days before, but what is the end
- 25 date for when someone could claim? Could it be last



- 1 year? Could it be, you know, within two years? We just
- 2 want to be sure.
- MR. BARRETT: Great. Thank you, Gina. We'll take
- 4 the comment that clarity is needed on the time frame on
- 5 which a claim can be backdated.
- 6 MS. RUTLEDGE: And then with that, we want to know,
- 7 you know, for fraud on a voluntary plan and considering
- 8 on the voluntary plan's aspect, who would consider, you
- 9 know, the -- we would like a better definition of fraud,
- 10 put it that way, you know, something that is very clear
- and cohesive as to this type of evidence for fraud.
- 12 Maybe, you know, who would define the fraud criteria?
- 13 Would it be the employer? Would it be you guys at the
- 14 state?
- MR. BARRETT: Thank you again, Gina. We'll take
- 16 the comment that clear definitions of fraud as well as
- 17 clear and cohesive definitions as to the types of
- 18 evidence to demonstrate fraud are needed.
- 19 MS. RUTLEDGE: Great. Thank you.
- 20 MR. BARRETT: The floor is open for further
- 21 comment. We are now accepting comments by those joining
- 22 us in the room or by phone on Phase 4 of Paid Family and
- 23 Medical Leave rulemaking. If you have testimony to
- 24 offer on Phase 4 of Paid Family and Medical Leave
- 25 rulemaking, either here in the room or on the phone, you



- 1 may do so at this time.
- 2 We are now accepting comments from those joining us
- 3 here in the room or by phone of Phase 4 of Paid Family
- 4 and Medical Leave rulemaking.
- 5 Is there any further testimony concerning the
- 6 proposed ruling made either by phone or in person before
- 7 I conclude this hearing?
- 8 MS. RUTLEDGE: Hi. This is Gina Rutledge again.
- 9 If I may have one more question. When will an employer
- 10 know that their employee is receiving benefits? If
- 11 we're going to cough up, we would want to know how much
- 12 they are getting so that we don't overpay them.
- MR. BARRETT: So, Gina, we'll take the comment that
- 14 employers would like information regarding the benefit
- 15 that the employee is receiving from the state once they
- 16 are on leave.
- 17 MS. RUTLEDGE: That would be great. Thank you so
- 18 much.
- 19 MR. BARRETT: Is there any further testimony
- 20 concerning the proposed rulemaking by either phone or in
- 21 person before I conclude this hearing?
- In conclusion, this hearing was convened to
- 23 consider testimony on Phase 4 of the Paid Family and
- 24 Medical Leave rulemaking related to the continuation of
- 25 benefits, fraud and other topics related to establishing



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a program. All oral testimony presented at this hearing
 1
     and written submissions will become part of the written
 2
              The deadline for submission of written comments
 3
 4
     is today, May 29th, 2019, at 5:00 p.m. You can submit
     written comments online by entering bit.ly/commentforum
 5
 6
     into your Web browser. Comments must be received by
     that deadline to be considered as part of this
 7
     rulemaking.
 8
 9
          A final decision regarding adoption of this
10
     proposed rulemaking will be made after all testimony and
11
     written comments have been fully considered with a
12
     target date of June 5th, 2019.
13
          On behalf of Commissioner Suzi LeVine, I'd like to
14
     thank you for participating in today's hearing.
15
     hearing is adjourned at 9:27 a.m. on May 29th, 2019.
16
          (PROCEEDINGS CONCLUDED AT 9:27 A.M.)
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| 1  | CERTIFICATE  |
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| 2  |  |
| 3  | STATE OF WASHINGTON )                              |
| 4  | ) ss.<br>COUNTY OF SPOKANE )                       |
| 5  |  |
| 6  |  |
| 7  | I, RACHAEL L. HALL, do hereby certify that         |
| 8  | pursuant to the Rules of Civil Procedure, that I   |
| 9  | transcribed the oral proceedings in the foregoing  |
| 10 | matter, and that the foregoing transcript pages    |
| 11 | constitute a full, true and correct record of such |
| 12 | oral proceedings and of the whole thereof.         |
| 13 | Witness my hand this 4th day of June, 2019.        |
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| 23 | RACHAEL LOUISE HALL CSR, CRR NO. 3265              |
| 24 | Colt, Citt No. 3203                                |
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