

SENATE No. 2479

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court
(2023-2024)

SENATE, October 19, 2023.

The committee on Labor and Workforce Development, to whom was referred the petitions (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1166) of Ryan C. Fattman, Joseph D. McKenna, Brian M. Ashe, Alyson M. Sullivan-Almeida and other members of the General Court for legislation to ensure domestic violence victims' protections for all employees in the Commonwealth; and (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1919) of Joseph D. McKenna, Ryan C. Fattman and others relative to employment protections for domestic violence victims, reports the accompanying bill (Senate, No. 2479).

For the committee,
Patricia D. Jehlen

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An Act ensuring domestic violence victims' protections for all employees in the Commonwealth.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 Chapter 149 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2020 Official Edition, is hereby
2 amended by inserting after section 52E the following section:-

3 Section 52F: Leave from work when a contract worker has been victim of abusive
4 behavior

5 (a) For purposes of this section, the following words shall have the following meanings,
6 unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

7 "Abuse", (i) attempting to cause or causing physical harm; (ii) placing another in fear of
8 imminent serious physical harm; (iii) causing another to engage involuntarily in sexual relations
9 by force, threat or duress or engaging or threatening to engage in sexual activity with a
10 dependent child; (iv) engaging in mental abuse, which includes threats, intimidation or acts
11 designed to induce terror; (v) depriving another of medical care, housing, food or other
12 necessities of life; or (vi) restraining the liberty of another.

13 "Abusive behavior", (i) any behavior constituting domestic violence, (ii) stalking in
14 violation of section 43 of chapter 265, (iii) sexual assault, which shall include a violation of
15 sections 13B, 13B1/2, 13B3/4, 13F, 13H, 22, 22A, 22B, 22C, 23, 23A, 23B, 24, 24B, 26D, 50 or
16 51 of chapter 265 or sections 3 or 35A of chapter 272 and (iv) kidnapping in violation of the
17 third paragraph of section 26 of chapter 265.

18 "Client employers", a business entity, regardless of its form, that obtains or is provided
19 workers to perform labor or services within its usual course of business from a third party, which
20 includes a staffing agency as defined by section 159C of chapter 149.

21 "Contract workers", individuals who perform services for an employer but are not
22 considered employees under section 148B of chapter 149 of the General Laws, including
23 individuals who are contracted by client employers.

24 "Domestic violence", abuse against a contract worker by: (i) a current or former spouse of
25 the contract worker; (ii) a person with whom the contract worker shares a child in common; (iii)
26 a person who is cohabitating with or has cohabitated with the contract worker; (iv) a person who
27 is related by blood or marriage to the contract worker; or (v) a person with whom the contract
28 worker has or had a dating or engagement relationship.

29 (b) A client employer shall permit a contract worker to take up to 15 days of leave from
30 work in any 12 month period if:

31 (i) the contract worker is a victim of abusive behavior; and

32 (ii) the contract worker is using the leave from work to: seek or obtain medical attention,
33 counseling, victim services or legal assistance; secure housing; obtain a protective order from a

34 court; appear in court or before a grand jury; meet with a district attorney or other law
35 enforcement official; or attend child custody proceedings or address other issues directly related
36 to the abusive behavior against the contract worker.

37 The client employer shall have sole discretion to determine whether any leave taken
38 under this section shall be paid or unpaid.

39 (c) Except in cases of imminent danger to the health or safety of a contract worker, a
40 contract worker seeking leave from work under this section shall provide appropriate advance
41 notice of the leave to the client employer as required by the client employer's leave policy.

42 If there is a threat of imminent danger to the health or safety of a contract worker, the
43 contract worker shall not be required to provide advanced notice of leave; provided, however,
44 that the contract worker shall notify the client employer within 3 workdays that the leave was
45 taken or is being taken under this section. Such notification may be communicated to the client
46 employer by the contract worker, a family member of the contract worker or the contract
47 worker's counselor, social worker, health care worker, member of the clergy, shelter worker,
48 legal advocate or other professional who has assisted the contract worker in addressing the
49 effects of the abusive behavior on the contract worker.

50 If an unscheduled absence occurs, a client employer shall not take any negative action
51 against the contract worker if the contract worker, within 30 days from the unauthorized absence
52 or within 30 days from the last unauthorized absence in the instance of consecutive days of
53 unauthorized absences, provides any of the documentation described in paragraphs (1) to (7),
54 inclusive, of subsection (d).

55 (d) A client employer may require a contract worker to provide documentation
56 evidencing that the contract worker has been a victim of abusive behavior and that the leave
57 taken is consistent with the conditions of clauses (i) and (ii), inclusive, of subsection (b);
58 provided, however, that a client employer shall not require a contract worker to show evidence of
59 an arrest, conviction or other law enforcement documentation for such abusive behavior. A
60 contract worker shall provide such documentation to the client employer within a reasonable
61 period after the client employer requests documentation relative to the contract worker's absence.
62 A contract worker shall satisfy this documentation requirement by providing any 1 of the
63 following documents to the client employer.

64 (1) A protective order, order of equitable relief or other documentation issued by a court
65 of competent jurisdiction as a result of abusive behavior against the contract worker.

66 (2) A document under the letterhead of the court, provider or public agency which the
67 contract worker attended for the purposes of acquiring assistance as it relates to the abusive
68 behavior against the contract worker.

69 (3) A police report or statement of a victim or witness provided to police, including a
70 police incident report, documenting the abusive behavior complained of by the contract worker.

71 (4) Documentation that the perpetrator of the abusive behavior against the contract
72 worker has: admitted to sufficient facts to support a finding of guilt of abusive behavior; or has
73 been convicted of, or has been adjudicated a juvenile delinquent by reason of, any offense
74 constituting abusive behavior and which is related to the abusive behavior that necessitated the
75 leave under this section.

76 (5) Medical documentation of treatment as a result of the abusive behavior complained of
77 by the contract worker.

78 (6) A sworn statement, signed under the penalties of perjury, provided by a counselor,
79 social worker, health care worker, member of the clergy, shelter worker, legal advocate or other
80 professional who has assisted the contract worker in addressing the effects of the abusive
81 behavior.

82 (7) A sworn statement, signed under the penalties of perjury, from the contract worker
83 attesting that the contract worker has been the victim of abusive behavior. Any documentation
84 provided to a client employer under this section may be maintained by the client employer in the
85 contract worker's employment record but only for as long as required for the client employer to
86 make a determination as to whether the contract worker is eligible for leave under this section.

87 (e) All information related to the contract worker's leave under this section shall be kept
88 confidential by the client employer and shall not be disclosed, except to the extent that disclosure
89 is:

90 (i) requested or consented to, in writing, by the contract worker;

91 (ii) ordered to be released by a court of competent jurisdiction;

92 (iii) otherwise required by applicable federal or state law;

93 (iv) required in the course of an investigation authorized by law enforcement, including,
94 but not limited to, an investigation by the attorney general; or

95 (v) necessary to protect the safety of the contract worker or others employed at the
96 workplace.

97 (f) Any contract worker seeking leave under this section shall exhaust all annual or
98 vacation leave, personal leave and sick leave available to the contract worker, prior to requesting
99 or taking leave under this section, unless the client employer waives this requirement.

100 (g) No client employer shall coerce, interfere with, restrain or deny the exercise of, or any
101 attempt to exercise, any rights provided under this section or to make leave requested or taken
102 hereunder contingent upon whether or not the victim maintains contact with the alleged abuser.

103 (h) No client employer shall discharge or in any other manner discriminate against a
104 contract worker for exercising the contract worker's rights under this section. The taking of leave
105 under this section shall not result in the loss of any employment benefit accrued prior to the date
106 on which the leave taken under this section commenced. Upon the contract worker's return from
107 such leave, the contract worker shall be entitled to restoration to the contract worker's original
108 job or to an equivalent position.

109 (i) The attorney general shall enforce this section and may seek injunctive relief or other
110 equitable relief to enforce this section.

111 (j) Client employers shall notify each contract worker of the rights and responsibilities
112 provided by this section including those related to notification requirements and confidentiality.

113 (k) This section shall not be construed to exempt a client employer from complying with
114 chapter 258B, section 14B of chapter 268 or any other general or special law or to limit the rights
115 of any contract worker under said chapter 258B, said section 14B of chapter 268 or any other
116 general or special law.

117 (1) Any benefit received from this section shall not be considered relevant in any criminal
118 or civil proceeding as it relates to the alleged abuse unless, after a hearing, a justice of the
119 district, superior or probate court determines that such benefit is relevant to the allegations.