

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to public employee housing benefits;
3 creating s. 112.049, F.S.; providing definitions;
4 authorizing specified public employers to provide a
5 one-time payout of sick leave and annual leave to
6 certain employees for a specified purpose; providing
7 requirements for the payout; requiring the Department
8 of Management Services to adopt rules; authorizing
9 political subdivisions to take certain actions to
10 implement specified provisions; providing
11 construction; providing an effective date.

12
13 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes the importance of
14 home ownership in promoting family stability, responsible
15 citizenship, and long-term investment in communities, and

16 WHEREAS, the Legislature intends to authorize public
17 employers to offer a voluntary, one-time payout of accrued
18 sick and annual leave to assist employees with the purchase
19 of a primary residence, NOW, THEREFORE,

20
21 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

22
23 **Section 1. Section 112.049, Florida Statutes, is created**
24 **to read:**

25 112.049 Heroes Reward Program.—

26 (1) As used in this section, the term:

27 (a) "Employee" means any individual employed by a public
28 employer on a full-time, active basis in a permanent, benefits-
29 eligible position.

30 (b) "Primary residence" means the dwelling the employee
31 intends to occupy as his or her principal and permanent
32 residence.

33 (c) "Public employer" has the same meaning as in s.
34 447.203(2).

35 (2) Notwithstanding s. 110.219, a public employer may
36 provide an employee a one-time payout of his or her sick or
37 annual leave, or a combination thereof, for the purchase of a
38 primary residence if:

39 (a) The payout is used to assist with the purchase of a
40 primary residence and such purchase is evidenced by:

41 1. A fully executed purchase-and-sale agreement.

42 2. A final closing disclosure or settlement statement,
43 issued by a licensed closing or escrow agent. This does not
44 include estimated, preliminary, or unsigned documents.

45 (b) The employee retains a balance of at least 21 days of
46 accrued sick leave following the payout.

47 (c) The employee is able to redeem any requested amount of
48 accrued annual leave, with no maximum cap, provided the employee
49 otherwise meets the requirements of this section.

50 (d) The public employer provides the employee with a

51 written statement confirming the one-time, nonrefundable nature
52 of the payout.

53 (3) A payout under this section is separate from and in
54 addition to the number of hours of accrued annual leave that may
55 be used for purposes of the Deferred Retirement Option Program
56 under s. 121.091.

57 (a) Leave paid out under this section must be deducted
58 from the employee's accrued leave balances at the time of
59 payment and may not later be counted toward any terminal leave
60 payout or other leave conversion program.

61 (b) All payments must be made at the employee's current
62 base rate of pay and are subject to applicable taxes. A payout
63 under this section is not terminal pay, severance pay, or
64 compensation for purposes of retirement calculations under
65 chapter 121.

66 (c) At the employee's written request, the employer shall
67 remit the approved payout directly to a licensed closing or
68 escrow agent identified in the final closing disclosure or
69 settlement statement.

70 (d) Upon receipt of a complete and compliant request from
71 the employee, including a fully executed purchase-and-sale
72 agreement and a final closing disclosure, the employer shall
73 disburse funds by electronic wire transfer to the designated
74 closing or escrow agent no later than 3 business working days
75 after the scheduled closing date.

76 (e) Funds deposited under this section shall be disbursed
77 solely for allowable home purchase costs at closing. If the
78 transaction does not close, the escrow agent shall return the
79 funds to the employer with 5 business days, and the employee's
80 leave balances shall be restored accordingly.

81 (4) (a) The Department of Management Services shall adopt
82 rules to implement this section.

83 (b) A political subdivision may implement this program by
84 ordinance, resolution, written policy, or collective bargaining
85 agreement.

86 (c) The program does not require any public employer to
87 establish or maintain the benefit authorized in this section.

88 **Section 2.** This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.