

By Senator Calatayud

38-01251B-26

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to public employee housing benefits; creating s. 112.049, F.S.; defining terms; authorizing specified public employers to provide a one-time payout of sick leave and annual leave to certain employees for a specified purpose; providing requirements for the payout; requiring the employer to remit payment and disburse funds in a specified manner; requiring an escrow agent to return funds under certain circumstances; requiring the Department of Management Services to adopt rules; authorizing political subdivisions to take certain actions to implement specified provisions; providing construction; providing an effective date.

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

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

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

Section 1. Section 112.049, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

112.049 Heroes Reward Program.—

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

38-01251B-26

20261432

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

33 (b) "Primary residence" means the dwelling the employee
34 intends to occupy as his or her principal and permanent
35 residence.

36 (c) "Public employer" has the same meaning as in s.
37 447.203(2).

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

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

44 1. A fully executed purchase-and-sale agreement.
45 2. A final closing disclosure or settlement statement,
46 issued by a licensed closing or escrow agent. This does not
47 include estimated, preliminary, or unsigned documents.

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

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

53 (d) The public employer provides the employee with a
54 written statement confirming the one-time, nonrefundable nature
55 of the payout.

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

38-01251B-26

20261432

59 under s. 121.091.60 (a) Leave paid out under this section must be deducted from
61 the employee's accrued leave balances at the time of payment and
62 may not later be counted toward any terminal leave payout or
63 other leave conversion program.64 (b) All payments must be made at the employee's current
65 base rate of pay and are subject to applicable taxes. A payout
66 under this section is not terminal pay, severance pay, or
67 compensation for purposes of retirement calculations under
68 chapter 121.69 (c) At the employee's written request, the employer shall
70 remit the approved payout directly to a licensed closing or
71 escrow agent identified in the final closing disclosure or
72 settlement statement.73 (d) Upon receipt of a complete and compliant request from
74 the employee, including a fully executed purchase-and-sale
75 agreement and a final closing disclosure, the employer shall
76 disburse funds by electronic wire transfer to the designated
77 closing or escrow agent no later than 3 business working days
78 after the scheduled closing date.79 (e) Funds deposited under this section shall be disbursed
80 solely for allowable home purchase costs at closing. If the
81 transaction does not close, the escrow agent shall return the
82 funds to the employer with 5 business days, and the employee's
83 leave balances shall be restored accordingly.84 (4) (a) The Department of Management Services shall adopt
85 rules to implement this section.86 (b) A political subdivision may implement this program by
87 ordinance, resolution, written policy, or collective bargaining

38-01251B-26

20261432

88 agreement.89 (c) The program does not require any public employer to
90 establish or maintain the benefit authorized in this section.

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