

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:

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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

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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

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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.