

### **AB 372 (VOEPEL & GONZALEZ) INFANT AT WORK PROGRAMS**

**POSITION:** The Chamber's Education and Workforce Roundtable voted to SUPPORT the legislation on June 19, 2019. The Chamber's Public Policy Committee voted to SUPPORT the legislation on July 9, 2019. The Chamber's Board of Directors voted to SUPPORT bill on July 25, 2019.

**RATIONALE:** Alleviating the burden of cost-prohibitive childcare facing parents and expanding the option to parents may encourage employees to come back to work before the end of parental leave.

**STATUS:** AB 372 was introduced by Assemblymember Randy Voepel on April 22, 2019. On July 1, the bill was referred to the Appropriations suspense file.

#### **SUMMARY**

AB 372 would authorize state agencies to adopt the Infant at Work program which allows an employee of the agency who is a new parent or caregiver to bring the infant, age six weeks to six months (or until crawling), to the workplace.

#### **INDUSTRY/IES IMPACTED**

State agencies.

#### **SUPPORTERS**

- American Academy of Pediatrics, California
- CA Association of Professional Scientists
- First 5 California
- Orange County Auditor-Controller
- Professional Engineers in CA Government

#### **OPPONENTS**

None known.

#### **ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR**

- To increase talent attraction, retention, and productivity, this legislation would offer support for a particular subset of talent working for State agencies – new parents.
- This bill would provide one more option to for new parents when the need it most potentially increasing the amount of time new parents spend with their newborn, and improving health outcomes for the parent and child.
- This bill will help alleviate the burden of cost-prohibitive childcare.

#### **ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION**

- There is no language requiring reporting to allow appropriate evaluations such as the number of employee/infant participants, the positive and negative attributes of the program in relation to the effects on work environment, or the number of parents participating in lieu of existing parental leave programs.
- Allowing for parents to bring children into the workplace could discourage new parents from taking their full leave.

## **MORE INFORMATION**

According to the Child Care Aware of America Report: "Parents and the High Cost of Child Care: 2016," California is ranked in the top 10 of least affordable states for infant care. In addition to this, the most vital stage of brain development is during infancy. This bill is intended to help alleviate the burden of cost-prohibitive childcare while also promoting the nurturing bond between an infant and caregiver, which has long-term positive benefits to the child.

Similar programs have been adopted in Arizona and Washington after both states found success in pilot programs. Benefits following the pilot programs in Arizona and Washington include infant/parent bonding, potential relief of financial strain due to the high cost of childcare, increased productivity among employees, and easier breastfeeding accessibility for mothers. By increasing the access to breastfeeding, the state of Washington found an overall reduction in health care costs for babies during the pilot program. Both states reported the boost of employee morale and increased parent productivity.