

MOTION PERSONNEL & ANIMAL WELFARE

In recent years, the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) has worked diligently to recruit women and people of color as firefighters, in order to build a Department that reflects the City's diversity. Unfortunately, despite the LAFD's best efforts, the number of female firefighters in the Department remains low, as currently less than 100 of the 3,200 sworn personnel are women. As the LAFD continues to recruit and hire more female firefighters, the Department should ensure that it is addressing the unique needs of a sworn female workforce. One area in particular that may require increased attention is the Department's maternity leave policies that govern time off following childbirth and return-to-work rights.

Navigating through complex federal, state, and local maternity leave requirements can be difficult, and the nature of firefighting and the LAFD's structure often compound those difficulties. A properly structured maternity leave program should make it easy for women to apply for maternity leave, understand for which benefits they are eligible, and include an equitable and streamlined process for returning to work. Prior to taking leave, female firefighters should be provided with definitive information as to the effect that their maternity leave will have on their seniority (for both retirement and LAFD assignment purposes), and how they will be reintegrated into the Department upon their return. This type of information, as well as related personnel policies, should be memorialized within the Department and updated as necessary so that all LAFD employees receive accurate and timely information to help guide their decisions on leave.


In addition, it is clear that, as the Department works to increase the number of women firefighters in the LAFD, every effort must be made to identify and address the targeted needs of a female sworn workforce. Improved maternity leave could be one incentive that, if properly structured and implemented, could help to increase the number of female firefighter applicants to the LAFD, and possibly increase retention of current employees returning from maternity leave. To gauge the potential impact, the City should explore implementation of a pilot program that improves maternity leave benefits on a trial basis in the LAFD.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council instruct the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) to report within 45 days regarding its policies related to maternity leave for female firefighters, including, but not limited to, the following information:

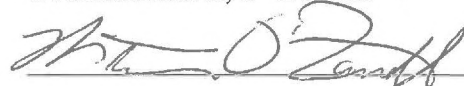
- A description of the LAFD's current process for handling maternity leave requests, including identification of the unit(s) and number of staff involved in processing requests, and the role that the medical liaison plays in the process;
- Summary details on how the LAFD ensures compliance with all federal, state, and local requirements for maternity leave;
- Department policies that detail what effect maternity leave has on a firefighter's seniority for both retirement purposes, and for the purpose of Department assignments;
- Summary information on the Department's seniority policies as they apply to military leave as compared to seniority policies for maternity leave;
- Identification of what guarantees firefighters have of returning to their previous assignment following completion of their maternity leave; and
- Options for firefighters to "buy back" unpaid time off taken for maternity leave.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Administrative Officer report on the feasibility of implementing a paid maternity leave program on a trial basis in LAFD, in an effort to improve recruitment and retention of female firefighters.

PRESENTED BY:


NURY MARTINEZ
Councilmember, 6th District

SECONDED BY:



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