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A bill to be entitled An act relating to employment benefits and accommodations for crime victims and witnesses; amending s. 443.101, F.S.; revising factors for exemptions from disqualification for employment assistance benefits; providing documentation requirements for such factors; providing definitions; amending s. 443.131, F.S.; providing that reemployment assistance benefits paid to employees as a result of the additional factors may not be charged to the employer's employment record; creating s. 448.046, F.S.; providing definitions; requiring employers to authorize employees to request and take up to a specified number of days of leave from work under certain circumstances; providing requirements and purposes for such leave; providing applicability; providing requirements for documentation for leave requests; requiring employees to exhaust other leave options before taking specified leave; authorizing employers to require employees to take leave concurrently; providing confidentiality requirements; requiring employers to provide reasonable work accommodations under certain circumstances; requiring employees to disclose specified information and provide specified documentation to request work

Page 1 of 21

accommodations; requiring employees to notify employers when accommodations are no longer needed; providing construction; requiring employers to maintain the confidentiality of specified information; prohibiting employers from engaging in specified actions under certain circumstances; providing remedies for violations of specified provisions; authorizing employees to claim as damages all wages and benefits under certain circumstances; providing an exception; amending s. 741.313, F.S.; conforming provisions to changes made by the act; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 443.101, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

443.101 Disqualification for benefits.—An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

(1) (a) For the week in which he or she has voluntarily left work without good cause attributable to his or her employing unit or for the week in which he or she has been discharged by the employing unit for misconduct connected with his or her work, based on a finding by the Department of Economic Opportunity. As used in this paragraph, the term "work"

Page 2 of 21

means any work, whether full-time, part-time, or temporary.

- 1. Disqualification for voluntarily quitting continues for the full period of unemployment next ensuing after the individual has left his or her full-time, part-time, or temporary work voluntarily without good cause and until the individual has earned income equal to or greater than 17 times his or her weekly benefit amount. As used in this subsection, the term "good cause" includes only that cause attributable to the employing unit which would compel a reasonable employee to cease working or attributable to the individual's illness or disability requiring separation from his or her work. Any other disqualification may not be imposed.
- 2. An individual is not disqualified under this subsection for:
- a. Voluntarily leaving temporary work to return immediately when called to work by the permanent employing unit that temporarily terminated his or her work within the previous 6 calendar months;
- b. Voluntarily leaving work to relocate as a result of his or her military-connected spouse's permanent change of station orders, activation orders, or unit deployment orders; or
- c. Voluntarily leaving work if he or she proves that his or her discontinued employment is a direct result of circumstances related to <u>stalking as described in s. 784.048(2)-</u>
  (5) and (7), sexual violence as defined in s. 741.313(1), or

Page 3 of 21

domestic violence as defined in s. 741.28. An individual who voluntarily leaves work under this sub-subparagraph must:

- (I) Make reasonable efforts to preserve employment, unless the individual establishes that such remedies are likely to be futile or to increase the risk of future incidents of <u>stalking</u>, <u>sexual violence</u>, or domestic violence. Such efforts may include seeking a protective injunction, relocating to a secure place, or seeking reasonable accommodation from the employing unit, such as a transfer or change of assignment;
- (II) Provide evidence such as an injunction, a protective order, medical records, mental health records, a law enforcement report, or other documentation authorized by state law which reasonably proves that domestic violence has occurred; and
- (III) Reasonably believe that he or she is likely to be the victim of a future act of stalking, sexual violence, or domestic violence at, in transit to, or departing from his or her place of employment. An individual who is otherwise eligible for benefits under this sub-subparagraph is ineligible for each week that he or she no longer meets such criteria or refuses a reasonable accommodation offered in good faith by his or her employing unit.
- d.(I) If sub-subparagraph c. does not otherwise already
  apply, voluntarily leaving work if:
- (A) He or she is a witness to a crime, his or her immediate family member is a witness to a crime, or his or her

Page 4 of 21

immediate family member was a homicide victim; and

- (B) His or her discontinued employment is a direct result of circumstances related to the crime.
- (II) An individual who voluntarily leaves work under this sub-subparagraph must:
- (A) Make reasonable efforts to preserve employment, unless the individual establishes that such remedies are likely to be futile or to increase the risk of future victimization. Such efforts may include seeking a protective injunction, relocating to a secure place, or seeking reasonable accommodation from the employing unit, such as a transfer or change of assignment;
- (B) Provide evidence such as an injunction, a protective order, medical records, mental health records, a law enforcement report, or other documentation authorized by state law which reasonably verifies that a crime has occurred; and
- (C) Reasonably believe that he or she is likely to be the victim of a future crime at, in transit to, or departing from his or her place of employment. An individual who is otherwise eligible for benefits under this sub-subparagraph is ineligible for each week that he or she no longer meets such criteria or refuses a reasonable accommodation offered in good faith by his or her employing unit.
- 3. The employment record of an employing unit may not be charged for the payment of benefits to an individual who has voluntarily left work under sub-subparagraph 2.c. or sub-

Page 5 of 21

## subparagraph 2.d.

- 4. Disqualification for being discharged for misconduct connected with his or her work continues for the full period of unemployment next ensuing after having been discharged and until the individual is reemployed and has earned income of at least 17 times his or her weekly benefit amount and for not more than 52 weeks immediately following that week, as determined by the department in each case according to the circumstances or the seriousness of the misconduct, under the department's rules for determining disqualification for benefits for misconduct.
- 5. If an individual has provided notification to the employing unit of his or her intent to voluntarily leave work and the employing unit discharges the individual for reasons other than misconduct before the date the voluntary quit was to take effect, the individual, if otherwise entitled, shall receive benefits from the date of the employer's discharge until the effective date of his or her voluntary quit.
- 6. If an individual is notified by the employing unit of the employer's intent to discharge the individual for reasons other than misconduct and the individual quits without good cause before the date the discharge was to take effect, the claimant is ineligible for benefits pursuant to s. 443.091(1)(d) for failing to be available for work for the week or weeks of unemployment occurring before the effective date of the discharge.

151	7. As used in this paragraph, the term:
152	a. "Crime" means any of the following:
153	(I) Sexual violence as defined in s. 741.313(1).
154	(II) Domestic violence as defined in s. 741.28.
155	(III) Stalking as described in s. 784.048(2), (3), (4),
156	(5), or (7).
157	(IV) A crime that causes physical injury, psychological
158	injury with the threat of physical injury, or death to the
159	victim.
160	b. "Immediate family member" means any of the following:
161	(I) A parent, child, or sibling of an individual, whether
162	by blood, adoption, or marriage and regardless of the age of the
163	family member or individual.
164	(II) A legal guardian of an individual, a person who
165	stands in loco parentis to an individual, or a person who was a
166	legal guardian to an individual or who stood in loco parentis to
167	an individual when the individual was a minor.
168	(III) A person to whom an individual is a legal guardian,
169	to whom an individual stands in loco parentis, or to whom an
170	individual was a legal guardian or stood in loco parentis when
171	the person was a minor.
172	(IV) A spouse, fiancé, or fiancée of an individual.
173	(V) A person who lives in the same dwelling unit as an
174	individual and who has a relationship of a romantic or intimate
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Page 7 of 21

(VI) A person who lives in the same dwelling unit as an individual and who is related to the individual by blood, adoption, or marriage, or a person who has at any time lived in the same dwelling unit as an individual and whose close association with the individual is similar to that of a parent, child, sibling, or spouse.

- c. "Witness" means a person, including, but not limited to, the victim, who witnessed any part of the commission of a crime and who was neither the perpetrator nor an accomplice.
- Section 2. Paragraph (a) of subsection (3) of section 443.131, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:
  - 443.131 Contributions.

- (3) VARIATION OF CONTRIBUTION RATES BASED ON BENEFIT EXPERIENCE.—
- (a) Employment records.—The regular and short-time compensation benefits paid to an eligible individual shall be charged to the employment record of each employer who paid the individual wages of at least \$100 during the individual's base period in proportion to the total wages paid by all employers who paid the individual wages during the individual's base period. Benefits may not be charged to the employment record of an employer who furnishes part-time work to an individual who, because of loss of employment with one or more other employers, is eligible for partial benefits while being furnished part-time work by the employer on substantially the same basis and in

Page 8 of 21

substantially the same amount as the individual's employment during his or her base period, regardless of whether this part-time work is simultaneous or successive to the individual's lost employment. Further, as provided in s. 443.151(3), benefits may not be charged to the employment record of an employer who furnishes the Department of Economic Opportunity with notice, as prescribed in rules of the department, that any of the following apply:

- 1. If an individual leaves his or her work without good cause attributable to the employer or is discharged by the employer for misconduct connected with his or her work, benefits subsequently paid to the individual based on wages paid by the employer before the separation may not be charged to the employment record of the employer.
- 2. If an individual is discharged by the employer for unsatisfactory performance during an initial employment probationary period, benefits subsequently paid to the individual based on wages paid during the probationary period by the employer before the separation may not be charged to the employer's employment record. As used in this subparagraph, the term "initial employment probationary period" means an established probationary plan that applies to all employees or a specific group of employees and that does not exceed 90 calendar days following the first day a new employee begins work. The employee must be informed of the probationary period within the

first 7 days of work. The employer must demonstrate by conclusive evidence that the individual was separated because of unsatisfactory work performance and not because of lack of work due to temporary, seasonal, casual, or other similar employment that is not of a regular, permanent, and year-round nature.

- 3. Benefits subsequently paid to an individual after his or her refusal without good cause to accept suitable work from an employer may not be charged to the employment record of the employer if any part of those benefits are based on wages paid by the employer before the individual's refusal to accept suitable work. As used in this subparagraph, the term "good cause" does not include distance to employment caused by a change of residence by the individual. The department shall adopt rules prescribing for the payment of all benefits whether this subparagraph applies regardless of whether a disqualification under s. 443.101 applies to the claim.
- 4. If an individual is separated from work as a direct result of a natural disaster declared under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. ss. 5121 et seq., benefits subsequently paid to the individual based on wages paid by the employer before the separation may not be charged to the employment record of the employer.
- 5. If an individual is separated from work as a direct result of an oil spill, terrorist attack, or other similar disaster of national significance not subject to a declaration

Page 10 of 21

under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency
Assistance Act, benefits subsequently paid to the individual
based on wages paid by the employer before the separation may
not be charged to the employment record of the employer.

- 6. If an individual is separated from work as a direct result of stalking, sexual violence, domestic violence, or a crime and meets all requirements in s. 443.101(1)(a)2.c. or 2.d., benefits subsequently paid to the individual based on wages paid by the employer before separation may not be charged to the employment record of the employer.
- Section 3. Section 448.046, Florida Statutes, is created to read:
- 448.046 Leave and work accommodations for victims or witnesses of crime.—
  - (1) As used in this section, the term:
  - (a) "Crime" means any of the following:
  - Sexual violence.

- 2. Domestic violence.
- 3. A crime that causes physical injury, psychological injury with the threat of physical injury, or death to the victim.
- (b) "Domestic violence" means domestic violence, as defined in s. 741.28; stalking, as described in s. 748.048(2), (3), (4), (5), or (7); or any crime the underlying factual basis of which has been found by a court to include an act of domestic

Page 11 of 21

276 violence or stalking.

- (c) "Employee" has the same meaning as in s. 440.02(15).
- (d) "Employer" has the same meaning as in s. 440.02(16).
- (e) "Immediate family member" means any of the following:
- 1. A parent, child, or sibling of the employee, whether by blood, adoption, or marriage and regardless of the age of the family member or employee.
- 2. A legal guardian of the employee, a person who stands in loco parentis to the employee, or a person who was a legal guardian to the employee or who stood in loco parentis to the employee when the employee was a minor.
- 3. A person to whom the employee is a legal guardian, to whom the employee stands in loco parentis, or to whom the employee was a legal guardian or stood in loco parentis when the person was a minor.
  - 4. A spouse, fiancé, or fiancée of the employee.
- 5. A cohabitant who lives in the same dwelling unit as the employee and who has a relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the employee.
- 6. A person who lives in the same dwelling unit as the employee and who is related to the employee by blood, adoption, or marriage, or a person who has at any time lived in the same dwelling unit as the employee and whose close association with the employee is similar to that of a parent, child, sibling, or spouse.

Page 12 of 21

301	(f) "Sexual violence" has the same meaning as in s.
302	<u>741.313.</u>
303	(g) "Witness" means a person, including, but not limited
304	to, the victim, who witnessed any part of the commission of a
305	crime and who was neither the perpetrator nor an accomplice.
306	(2)(a) An employer shall authorize an employee who is not
307	otherwise already eligible for leave under s. 741.313 to request
308	and take up to 30 working days of leave from work in any 12-
309	month period if the employee or an immediate family member of
310	the employee is a witness to a crime in that 12-month period, or
311	if an immediate family member of the employee is a homicide
312	victim in that period. This leave may be with or without pay, at
313	the discretion of the employer.
314	(b) This section applies if an employee uses the leave
315	from work as a result of the crime to:
316	1. Seek an injunction for protection against domestic
317	violence or an injunction for protection in cases of repeat
318	violence, domestic violence, dating violence, or sexual
319	violence;
320	2. Seek a temporary restraining order, protective order,
321	or other injunction for protection;
322	3. Obtain medical care or mental health counseling, or
323	both, for the employee or an immediate family member of the
324	employee to address physical or psychological injuries resulting

Page 13 of 21

CODING: Words stricken are deletions; words underlined are additions.

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from the crime;

	4.	Ok	otai	in s	ervic	es	from	ιa	vi	cti	.m s	erv	ices	sor	gan	izat	io	n,
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- 5. Make the employee's home secure, or seek new housing, to improve the employee's safety or psychological well-being or the employee's immediate family member's safety or psychological well-being;
- 6. Seek legal assistance in addressing issues arising from the crime, or attend and prepare for court-related proceedings arising from the crime;
- 7. Make arrangements necessitated by the death of an employee's immediate family member as a result of the crime;
- 8. Grieve the death of an employee's immediate family member as a result of the crime; or
- 9. Make any other arrangements necessary to provide for the safety or psychological well-being of the employee or his or her immediate family member as a result of the crime.
- (3) This section applies to an employer who employs 25 or more employees and to an employee who has been employed by the employer for 3 or more months.
- (4) (a) Except in cases of imminent danger to the health or safety of the employee, or to the health or safety of an immediate family member of the employee, an employee seeking leave from work under this section must provide to his or her employer appropriate advance notice of the leave as required by

Page 14 of 21

the employer's policy along with sufficient documentation of the crime as required by the employer. The employer must accept any of the following as sufficient documentation of the crime:

1. A copy of an injunction for protection issued to the employee or the employee's immediate family member;

- 2. A copy of an order of no contact entered by the court in a criminal case in which the defendant was charged with committing a crime against the employee or the employee's immediate family member, or to which the employee or employee's immediate family member was otherwise a witness;
- 3. A written certification from a domestic violence center certified under chapter 39 or a rape crisis center as defined in s. 794.055(2) that states that the employee or the employee's immediate family member was a witness to a crime, or that the employee's immediate family member was a homicide victim;
- 4. A written certification from a public or nonprofit agency or program that receives moneys administered by the Office of the Attorney General to provide services to victims of or witnesses to a crime, that states that the employee or employee's immediate family member was a witness to a crime or that the employee's immediate family member was a homicide victim;
- 5. A copy of a law enforcement report documenting the crime and identifying the employee or the employee's immediate family member as a witness to a crime, or identifying the

Page 15 of 21

376	<pre>employee's immediate family member as a homicide victim;</pre>
377	6. A written statement from a marriage and family
378	therapist as defined in s. 394.455, mental health counselor as
379	defined in s. 394.455, physician as defined in s. 458.305,
380	physician assistant as defined in s. 394.455, psychiatric nurse
381	as defined in s. 394.455, psychiatrist as defined in s. 394.455,
382	or other health care practitioner as defined under s. 456.001
383	certifying that the employee or the employee's immediate family
384	member is receiving or has received treatment as a result of
385	being a witness to a crime, as a result of the employee's
386	immediate family member being a witness to a crime, or as a
387	result of the death of an employee's immediate family member as
388	a result of homicide; or
389	7. Any other documentation that is:
390	a. Sufficient to reasonably verify that the crime
391	occurred;
392	b. Authorized by state law; or
393	c. Acceptable to the employer.
394	(b) An employee seeking leave under this subsection must,
395	before receiving the leave, exhaust all annual or vacation
396	leave, personal leave, and sick leave, if applicable, that is
397	available to the employee, unless the employer waives this
398	requirement.
399	(c) An employer may require the employee to take leave
400	allowable under this section concurrently with any annual

Page 16 of 21

vacation leave, personal leave, and sick leave, if applicable, that is available to the employee.

- (d) To the extent allowed by law, an employer must maintain the confidentiality of all information relating to a request for leave made by an employee under this subsection.
- (5) (a) An employer must provide reasonable work accommodations if requested by an employee who:
  - 1. Is a witness to a crime;

- 2. Has an immediate family member who is a witness to a crime; or
- 3. Has an immediate family member who is deceased as a result of a homicide.
- (b) For the purposes of this subsection, reasonable accommodations may include, but are not limited to, the implementation of safety measures, including a transfer, reassignment, modified schedule, changed work telephone number, changed work station, installed lock, assistance in documenting crime that occurs in the workplace, an implemented safety procedure, or another reasonable adjustment to a job structure, workplace facility, or work requirement.
- (c) An employer is not required to provide a reasonable accommodation to an employee who has not disclosed his or her status as a witness to a crime, as a person with an immediate family member who is a witness to a crime, or as a person who has an immediate family member who is deceased as a result of a

Page 17 of 21

426 homicide.

- (d) An employer must engage in a timely, good faith, and interactive process with the employee to determine effective reasonable accommodations.
- (e) In determining whether the accommodation is reasonable, an employer shall consider any exigent circumstance or danger facing the employee.
- (f) An employee seeking reasonable accommodations under this subsection must provide to his or her employer sufficient documentation of the crime if requested by the employer. The employer must accept any of the items listed in paragraph (4)(a) as sufficient documentation.
- (g)1. If circumstances change and an employee needs a new accommodation, the employee shall request a new accommodation from the employer.
- 2. Upon receiving the request, the employer shall engage in a timely, good faith, and interactive process with the employee to determine effective reasonable accommodations.
- (h) If an employee no longer needs an accommodation, the employee shall notify the employer that the accommodation is no longer needed.
- (i) This subsection does not require the employer to undertake an action that constitutes an undue hardship on the employer's business operations.
  - (j) To the extent allowed by law, an employer must

Page 18 of 21

maintain the confidentiality of all information relating to a request for reasonable accommodations made by an employee under this subsection.

- (6) (a) An employer may not interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of or any attempt by an employee to exercise any right provided under this section.
- (b) An employer may not discharge, demote, suspend, retaliate, or in any other manner discriminate against an employee for exercising his or her rights under this section through a request for leave or for reasonable accommodations, regardless of whether the request is granted.
- (c) An employee has no greater rights to continued employment or to other benefits and conditions of employment than if the employee was not entitled to leave or reasonable accommodations under this section. This section does not limit the employer's right to discipline or terminate any employee for any reason, including, but not limited to, reductions in work force or termination for cause or for no reason at all, other than exercising his or her rights under this section.
- (7) Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, the sole remedy for any person claiming to be aggrieved by a violation of this section is to bring a civil suit for damages or equitable relief, or both, in circuit court. The person may claim as damages all wages and benefits that would have been due the person up to and including the date of the judgment had the

act violating this section not occurred, but the person may not claim wages or benefits for a period of leave granted without pay as provided in paragraph (2)(a). However, this section does not relieve the person from the obligation to mitigate his or her damages.

Section 4. Subsections (2) and (3) of section 741.313, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

741.313 Unlawful action against employees seeking protection.—

- (2) (a) An employer shall permit an employee to request and take up to  $\underline{30}$   $\underline{3}$  working days of leave from work in any 12-month period if the employee or a family or household member of an employee is the victim of domestic violence or sexual violence. This leave may be with or without pay, at the discretion of the employer.
- (b) This section applies if an employee uses the leave from work to:
- 1. Seek an injunction for protection against domestic violence or an injunction for protection in cases of repeat violence, domestic violence, dating violence, or sexual violence;
- 2. Obtain medical care or mental health counseling, or both, for the employee or a family or household member to address physical or psychological injuries resulting from the act of domestic violence or sexual violence;

Page 20 of 21

3. Obtain services from a victim services organization, including, but not limited to, a domestic violence shelter or program or a rape crisis center as a result of the act of domestic violence or sexual violence;

- 4. Make the employee's home secure from the perpetrator of the domestic violence or sexual violence or to seek new housing to improve the employee's or a family or household member's safety or psychological well-being escape the perpetrator; or
- 5. Seek legal assistance in addressing issues arising from the act of domestic violence or sexual violence or to attend and prepare for court or court-related proceedings arising from the act of domestic violence or sexual violence;
- 6. Seek a temporary restraining order, protective order, or other injunction for protection; or
- 7. Make any other arrangements necessary to provide for the safety or psychological well-being of the employee or a family or household member following the act of domestic violence or sexual violence.
- (3) This section applies to an employer who employs  $\underline{25}$   $\underline{50}$  or more employees and to an employee who has been employed by the employer for 3 or more months.
  - Section 5. This act shall take effect July 1, 2021.

Page 21 of 21