

City of Cincinnati



801 Plum Street, Suite 348
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

Phone: (513) 352-3466
Email: meeka.owens@cincinnati-oh.gov
Web: www.cincinnati-oh.gov

20260729

Meeka D. Owens
Cincinnati City Council

July 29th, 2026

Paid Leave for Bone Marrow and Organ Donation

WE MOVE that the City Administration prepare a policy that reflects the recommendations of report #202501372 Proposal #1

FURTHER WE MOVE that the Director of Human Resources, who serves as secretary of the Civil Service Commission, notify the Commission upon passage of this motion at the next meeting of the Commission.

FURTHER WE MOVE this benefit to be made available to all city employees who are represented by labor unions through their respective collective bargaining agreements. And that any amendments to those agreements be made to accommodate this policy.

Councilmember Meeka D. Owens

CHP
Liberal
Doh

March 1948



W. B. Smith

Mr. T. J. Smith

August 6, 2025

To: Mayor and Members of Council 202501372
From: Sheryl M. Long, City Manager
Subject: **Creation of Policy for City Employees who are Living Donors**

Reference Document # 202500031

On January 23, 2025, the Public Safety and Governance Committee referred the following for a report:

MOTION, submitted by Vice Mayor Kearney, **WE MOVE** that the administration of the City of Cincinnati to provide a report within ninety (90) days on creating a policy for city employees who are living donors of organs (*e.g.*, a kidney or parts of a liver), or bone marrow to receive full pay for time off needed to prepare for and complete the transplant process, and to recover from the medical procedure. UC Health and the Center for Closing the Health Gap recommend such a policy in order to encourage more living donors. (BALANCE OF MOTION ON FILE IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE)

The following report addresses policies and practices regarding leave for living organ and bone marrow donation across various jurisdictions, with a focus on identifying common standards, variations in benefits, and potential models for the City of Cincinnati. The report outlines paid and unpaid leave provisions in select cities and states, average recovery times by donation type, prevalence of donor transplants, and estimated costs associated with several leave policy proposals. This information is intended to provide a framework for evaluating feasible leave options for City Council's consideration.

SUMMARY OF OTHER JURISDICTIONS LIVING ORGAN AND BONE MARROW DONATION LEAVE POLICIES

This summary outlines Organ and Bone Marrow Donation leave policies across multiple governmental agencies. The policies vary by municipality, offering different levels of support to donors in terms of paid and unpaid leave, eligibility requirements, and procedural provisions.

Agencies offering paid donor leave:

- **U.S. Office of Personnel Management**

Provides options for paid leave for organ donation and bone marrow donation.

Leave Provisions:

- An employee also may use up to 30 days of paid leave each calendar year to serve as an organ donor.

- An employee may use up to 7 days of paid leave each calendar year to serve as a bone-marrow donor.
- **State of Ohio**
Provides options for paid leave for organ donation and bone marrow donation.
 - Requirements:**
 - Employees who desire to use Donor Leave must apply in writing ten working days prior to the procedure or as soon as possible after the employee is informed of the date of the procedure.
 - Employees must indicate Donor Leave and specify the type of donation (kidney, liver, or marrow).
 - Effective Date and Triggering Event: Eligibility for taking Donor Leave shall begin on the date of the procedure.
 - Leave Provisions:**
 - Eligible employees shall receive up to two-hundred-forty (240) hours of paid leave each calendar year to cover absences for the employee's donation of any portion of an adult liver or kidney.
 - Eligible employees shall receive up to fifty-six (56) hours of paid leave each calendar year for bone marrow donations.
- **Columbus, Ohio**
Provides options for paid leave for organ donation and bone marrow donation.
 - Leave Provisions:**
 - Eligible employees shall receive up to two-hundred-forty (240) hours of paid leave each calendar year to cover absences for the employee's donation of any portion of an adult liver or kidney.
 - Eligible employees shall receive up to fifty-six (56) hours of paid leave each calendar year for bone marrow donations.
- **Toledo, Ohio**
Provides options for paid leave for organ donation and bone marrow donation.
 - Requirements:**
 - Medical documentation must be submitted to Human Resources for approval.
 - Paid leave runs concurrently with applicable FMLA provisions.
 - Leave Provisions:**
 - Organ Donation: Up to 240 hours (30 workdays) of paid leave per calendar year.
 - Bone Marrow Donation: Up to 56 hours (7 workdays) of paid leave per calendar year.
- **Lexington, Kentucky**
Provides options for paid leave for organ donation and bone marrow donation.
 - Requirements:**
 - An employee must be a full-time classified or unclassified worker, excluding seasonal workers.
 - Medical verification is required before approval and upon completion of the procedures.

- FMLA leave must be used concurrently with donor leave.

Leave Provisions:

- Organ Donation: Up to 240 hours (30 workdays) of paid leave.
- Bone Marrow Donation: Up to 40 hours (5 workdays) of paid leave.

Agencies offering unpaid donor leave:

- **Chesapeake, Virginia**

Provides options for unpaid leave for organ donation and bone marrow donation.

Requirements:

- An employee must have at least 12 months of service and 1,250 hours worked in the previous year.
- Medical documentation verifying donor status and medical necessity is required.

Leave Provisions:

- Organ Donation: Up to 60 business days of unpaid leave per 12-month period.
- Bone Marrow Donation: Up to 30 business days of unpaid leave per 12-month period.

- **Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

Provides options for unpaid leave for organ donation and bone marrow donation.

Requirements:

- Employees must have worked for at least 52 consecutive weeks and at least 1,00 hours during that period.
- Leave is limited to the period necessary for the donation procedure and recovery.
- Employees may substitute paid or unpaid leave provided by the employer.
- Employees must provide written verification of their intent to donate.
- Employer may require certification from a healthcare provider regarding the donation and recovery period.

Leave Provisions:

- Organ Donation: Up to 6 weeks of unpaid leave in a 12-month period.
- Bone Marrow Donation: Up to 6 weeks of unpaid leave in a 12-month period.

Offers a Donor Leave Program that allows employees to donate accrued time-off to colleagues in need. Employees can donate vacation hours, compensatory hours, and holidays in whole-hour increments, but sick leave hours cannot be donated.

AVERAGE TIME AWAY FROM WORK FOR RECOVERY

Kidney Donation

On average, someone who donates a kidney can expect to be out of work for 2 to 6 weeks, depending on their job type and overall health.

- Desk Jobs or Remote Work: Recovery is usually quicker, around 2 to 4 weeks.
- Physically Demanding Jobs: If the job involves heavy lifting or strenuous activity, recovery may take 4 to 6 weeks.

Liver Donation

If someone donates a portion of their liver, the recovery time varies, but typically:

- Hospital Stay: 5–7 days after surgery.
- Initial Recovery: 6–8 weeks to resume normal daily activities.
- Full Recovery: 3–6 months for the liver to regenerate fully.
- Strenuous activities and heavy lifting should generally be avoided for about 3 months. Most donors can return to work within 6–8 weeks, depending on the nature of their job.

Bone Marrow Donation

The recovery time after donating bone marrow depends on the donation method:

1. Peripheral Blood Stem Cell (PBSC) Donation – Most common method (about 90% of cases).
 - a. Recovery time: A few days to a week
 - b. Side effects: Some donors feel flu-like symptoms or fatigue from the medication used to stimulate stem cell production but can often return to work within a couple of days.
2. Bone Marrow Donation (Surgical Procedure) – Less common, done under anesthesia.
 - a. Recovery time: 1 to 2 weeks
 - b. Side effects: Soreness at the collection site (hip bone), fatigue, and possible bruising. Some donors need a few extra days to a week before resuming normal activities.
 - c. Many donors return to work within a week, but full recovery varies by individual. If the job is physically demanding, a longer recovery period may be needed.

PREVELANCE OF DONOR TRANSPLANTS NATIONWIDE & BY CITY OF CINCINNATI EMPLOYEES

General Statistics:

- On average, around 20,000 to 25,000 people donate an organ each year in the United States. This includes both living donors (who donate a kidney or part of their liver) and deceased donors (who can provide multiple organs like kidneys, liver, heart, lungs, pancreas, and intestines).
- Kidney is the number one transplanted organ in the US.

City Statistics:

Below is a summary of the number of City of Cincinnati employee donations for kidney, liver, and bone marrow over the past 2 years.

- 2023
 - Kidney Donor: 1
 - Liver Donor: 0
 - Bone Marrow Donor: 1
- 2024
 - Kidney Donor: 2
 - Liver Donor: 0
 - Bone Marrow Donor: 0

LIVING ORGAN AND BONE MARROW DONATION LEAVE PROPOSALS & ESTIMATED COSTS

While the cost of providing paid donor leave will vary based on the donor's classification, rate of pay, and the type of donation, below are estimates based on donation type, amount of allotted leave, and hourly rate.

Proposal 1:

This proposal is based on average recovery time and mirrors the current leave policies of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, State of Ohio, City of Columbus and City of Toledo.

Proposed Amount of Additional Leave (by donation type):

Organ Donation

- 240 hours (30 workdays)

Bone Marrow Donation

- 56 hours (7 workdays)

Estimated Cost per Employee (by classification and hourly rate):

Classification	Hourly Rate (based on the top end of the classification salary)	Average cost for organ donation (240 hours)	Average cost for bone marrow donation (56 hours)
Administrative Specialist	\$43.30	\$10,392.00	\$2,424.80
Truck Driver	\$26.56	\$6,374.40	\$1,487.36
Electrical Maintenance Worker 3	\$35.27	\$8,464.80	\$1,975.12
Police Officer	\$44.32	\$10,636.80	\$2,481.92
Fire Fighter	\$43.15	\$10,356.00	\$2,416.40
Deputy Director	\$75.53	\$18,127.20	\$4,229.68

In addition to the above estimates, there are additional factors that may increase the overall cost of donation leave, including but not limited to:

- Utilization of overtime coverage in the employee's absence
- Utilization of temporary transfer pay, working out of classification pay, or above-grade pay to cover the employee's absence
- The need to temporarily backfill the employee's absence via temporary promotion

Proposal 2:

This proposal provides a benefit that is currently greater than most other municipalities across the state and country.

Proposed Amount of Additional Leave (by donation type):

Organ Donation

- 80 hours (10 workdays)

Bone Marrow Donation

- 24 hours (3 workdays)

Estimated Cost per Employee (by classification and hourly rate):

Classification	Hourly Rate (based on the top end of the classification salary)	Average cost for organ donation (80 hours)	Average cost for bone marrow donation (24 hours)
Administrative Specialist	\$43.30	\$3,464.00	\$1,039.20
Truck Driver	\$26.56	\$2,124.80	\$637.44
Electrical Maintenance Worker 3	\$35.27	\$2,821.60	\$846.48
Police Officer	\$44.32	\$3,545.60	\$1,063.68
Fire Fighter	\$43.15	\$3,452.00	\$1,035.60
Deputy Director	\$75.53	\$6,042.40	\$1,812.72

In addition to the above estimates, there are additional factors that may increase the overall cost of donation leave, including but not limited to:

- Utilization of overtime coverage in the employee's absence
- Utilization of temporary transfer pay, working out of classification pay, or above-grade pay to cover the employee's absence
- The need to temporarily backfill the employee's absence via temporary promotion

Proposal 3:

Employees wishing to donate an organ or bone marrow may utilize existing city benefits, which are outlined below.

Estimated Cost per Employee: No additional cost.

CURRENT CITY BENEFITS THAT MAY BE UTILIZED FOR ORGAN AND BONE MARROW DONATION

- Paid Leave Balances
 - Sick Leave
 - City employees accrue 4-hours of sick leave per pay period
 - Vacation Leave
 - Accrual amounts vary based on seniority and salary division
 - Accrual Range: 3.4 hours – 9.0 hours per pay period
 - Other Leave Balances (varies by salary division and bargaining unit):
 - Compensatory time
 - Flex time (CODE and Non-represented only)
 - Holiday leave (FOP and IAFF only)
- Advanced Vacation Purchase
 - Some employees may purchase vacation hours each year. The amount that can be purchased and whether this benefit is available varies by salary division and bargaining unit.
- Donated Time
 - Employees that exhaust all of their own paid leave balances may receive donated leave time from other City employees in certain circumstances. The

amount and type of leave that can be donated varies by salary division and bargaining unit.

- Usage of FMLA Leave
 - It is the policy of the City to provide up to 12 weeks of family and medical leave during any 12-month period to eligible employees in accordance with the provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA). If an eligible employee does not have any paid leave balances, they are entitled to utilize unpaid leave.

CONCLUSION

Living organ and bone marrow donation is a life-saving act that reflects the highest ideals of public service. While only a small number of City of Cincinnati employees have pursued donation in recent years, jurisdictional comparisons show a growing trend toward offering paid leave for donors, particularly for kidney and liver donations that require extended recovery time.

This report outlines three potential approaches for donor leave, each with different implications for cost, support, and implementation. Proposal 1 offers the most robust benefit, providing up to 240 hours of paid leave for organ donation and 56 hours for bone marrow donation. This level of leave aligns with federal and state standards and allows for full recovery time in most cases. However, it also represents the highest potential cost, particularly in positions that may require overtime coverage or backfilling during an employee's absence. While precise citywide cost projections are difficult to estimate due to the low number of historical donations, the per-employee cost for organ donation under this model could range from approximately \$6,000 to over \$18,000 per employee, depending on classification and hourly rate. Actual costs would vary based on the number of employees who utilize the benefit and the operational impacts in each department.

Proposal 2 offers a more moderate option, providing 80 hours of leave for organ donation and 24 hours for bone marrow donation. While this level of leave may not fully cover recovery for more invasive procedures, it offers a tangible benefit with reduced financial exposure. The per-employee cost under this model would be roughly one-third of Proposal 1's estimate.

Proposal 3 maintains the status quo, in which employees can use accrued leave or donated time but receive no dedicated benefit for donation. This option carries no new cost to the City.

These three proposals, each offering a different level of support and fiscal impact, are presented for your consideration. At this time, there are no available resources to support either proposal. If this is a priority for City Council, additional resources will need to be identified and allocated to move forward.

cc: Latisha Hazel, Director, Human Resources