

## **CLIENT ALERT: Recent and Anticipated Employment Law Developments for New England Employers**

As 2026 begins, employers should be aware of recent and anticipated developments in labor and employment law. Below, are summaries of several recently effective or anticipated laws, amendments to existing laws, or regulations for states in New England. However, all employers should be mindful that these types of laws—including but not limited to, those impacting rate of pay, paid leave, and required notices upon hiring—change from time to time. For example, as of January 1, 2026, Rhode Island requires employers to provide written notice to all employees at the start of their employment that provides information about key employment terms such as rate of pay, basis of pay, and policies regarding sick, vacation, and leave time. Thus, employers should keep track of impending and anticipated changes in their state. For more information, contact your Morgan, Brown & Joy attorney.

### ***Massachusetts Pay Transparency Law***

As a reminder, the Massachusetts Pay Transparency law, effective October 29, 2025, requires employers to disclose a position's pay range to job applicants and employees. Further, employers who employ more than 100 employees in Massachusetts at any point in the previous calendar year must submit copies of EEO data reports to the Commonwealth. For additional information about Massachusetts' pay transparency law and required EEO data reports, please see MBJ's previous Client Alerts: [Massachusetts Pay Transparency Law: Pay Range Disclosure Requirement Takes Effect](#) and [MA Pay Transparency Filing Deadline Approaches for EEO-1 Reports, State and Local Governments](#).

### ***Minimum Wage and Overtime Laws Effective January 1, 2026***

While the Massachusetts minimum wage did not change in 2026, state legislators continue to explore bills that would increase the minimum wage incrementally over the next few years. For example, if passed, Senate Bill S.1349 would increase the minimum wage from \$15.00 per hour to \$20.00 per hour by 2029. Other New England states and localities raised the minimum wage

on a state-wide or local basis effective January 1, 2026, including Connecticut (\$16.94 per hour); Maine (\$15.10 per hour); the cities of Portland, Maine (\$16.75 per hour for hours worked in the city and \$8.38 per hour for service workers) and Rockland, Maine (\$16.00 per hour for hours worked in the city); Rhode Island (\$16.00 per hour) and Vermont (\$14.42 per hour).

### ***Sick Leave and Paid Family or Medical Laws***

Consistent with a national trend, several states have enacted, expanded, or made other changes to their state sick, family and/or medical leave laws.

Massachusetts: The maximum weekly benefit available under the Massachusetts Paid Family Leave Act increased to \$1,230.39 on January 1, 2026. Employers are required to post updated workplace posters and provide required notices to reflect this change. The Massachusetts Department of Paid Family Medical Leave also issued a [memorandum](#) explaining the proper tax treatment of PFML benefits paid by the Department. Find additional information regarding tax treatment in a previous Client Alert: [Massachusetts Issues Critical Guidance Regarding Paid Family and Medical Leave in 2026](#).

Connecticut: Connecticut also increased the maximum weekly benefit that employees can receive under the Connecticut Paid Family and Medical Leave insurance program, which increased to \$1,016.40 effective January 1, 2026. Employers are required to post updated notices and workplace posters to reflect this change. Effective January 1, 2026, the state's Paid Sick Leave Law will apply to employers with 11 or more employees (the law previously covered slightly larger employers with 25 or more employees). By January 1, 2027, most employers will be covered by this law.

New Hampshire: Effective January 1, 2026, employers with 20 or more employees are required to provide their employees with up to 25 hours of unpaid, job protected parental medical leave per year to attend medical appointments related to childbirth, postpartum care, and pediatric care for their children within the first year of birth or adoption.

Rhode Island: Effective January 1, 2026, the state's Temporary Caregiver Insurance Program adds employees' siblings as covered family members, and adds leave for bone marrow (1 week of TCI) and organ donations (30 business days of TCI). In addition, leave benefits increased to 8 weeks per year.

### ***Notice of Terms of Hiring – Rhode Island***

Several states require employers to provide written notice requirements to employees upon hire. Recently, Rhode Island has joined this group of states and effective January 1, 2026, employers must provide a single written notice in English to all employees at the beginning of their employment that includes information about key employment terms. Find additional information in a previous Client Alert: [Recent Amendments to Rhode Island Employment Laws Require Employer Action](#).

### ***Artificial Intelligence***

Employers are increasingly using artificial intelligence to aid or facilitate employment decisions, including with respect to hiring and other daily operations. While the use of artificial intelligence can have enormous benefits, including with respect to efficiency and neutrality, employers are cautioned that employment law decisions made with the use of artificial intelligence are still subject to state and federal laws regarding employees, including but not limited to data security and anti-discrimination laws. For example, an employer's use of an algorithm that excludes a certain class of applicants could subject that employer to a claim of discrimination. Several states, including California, Illinois, Texas, New York, and New Jersey, have adopted laws requiring employers to provide transparency, or, to comply with specific guardrails if they are using artificial intelligence to facilitate employment decisions or operations. Although Massachusetts does not currently have legislation that regulates artificial intelligence in employment decisions, in 2024 the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office issued an "Advisory on the Application of Massachusetts Law to Artificial Intelligence", warning employers about the potential exposure that can arise from depending on systems that utilize artificial intelligence. Employers can expect that regulations regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence in employment to develop in 2026 and beyond.

### ***Next Steps***

The above is a brief summary of some of the many laws impacting New England employers in 2026 and beyond. Employers should continue to monitor compliance with effective or anticipated legislation. Employers with questions about these or other local laws should contact their M&J attorney.

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