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Rhode Island Adds New Protections for Menopause and Mandatory Wage Payment Notice to New Hires

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With menopause health benefits emerging as a tool in the war for talent, Rhode Island has recently taken steps to provide express protections related to an employee's menopause and related conditions. In addition, the state is also imposing new onboarding notice requirements regarding payment of wages and increase the minimum wage rate, as summarized below.

The Rhode Island Fair Employment Practices Act already required employers with at least four employees to provide reasonable accommodation related to pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition, including lactation or the need to express breast milk for a nursing child. Effective June 24, 2025, the Act is amended to require employers to also provide reasonable accommodation for an applicant's or employee's menopause or related condition, including, but not limited to, "the need to manage the effects of vasomotor symptoms."

The reasonable accommodation amendment triggers an obligation for Rhode Island employers to display and distribute an updated written notice of employee rights. The updated notice must be conspicuously posted in the workplace in an area accessible to employees and provided to all employees upon hire and within ten days of an employee notifying the employer of their pregnancy or menopause.

Rhode Island employers also must take steps to ensure compliance with the amended Rhode Island Payment of Wages Act, which, beginning January 1, 2026, will require employers to provide all new hires with a written notice (in English) containing the following information:

- the employee's rate of pay and basis thereof (e.g. hourly, salary, commission, etc.), and the specific application of any additional rates;
- allowances, if any, claimed for meals and lodging;
- the employer's policy on sick, vacation, personal leave, holidays, and hours;

- the employee's employment status and whether they are exempt from minimum wage and/or overtime;
- a list of deductions that may be made from the employee's pay;
- the number of days in the pay period, the regularly scheduled payday, and the payday on which the employee will receive their first pay;
- the employer's contact information, including the employer's legal name and any operating names, the physical and mailing addresses of the principal place of business, and telephone number.

Employers must retain a copy of the notice, signed by each employee, acknowledging their receipt. Employers will be subject to a $400 fine for a first or second violation; subsequent violations are considered misdemeanors and may result in a minimum penalty of $400 and/or imprisonment of up to one year.

Employers with employees in Rhode Island should update their existing policies as needed to account for menopause-related accommodation and prepare for the new hire wage payment notice distribution starting on January 1, 2026.

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