

MMA Wants Minimum 98 Days’ Maternity Leave For Civil Servants

By CodeBlue | 7 August 2024

MMA calls for the civil service’s minimum paid maternity leave entitlement to be raised to 98 days from 60 days to avoid double standards between the public and private sectors. Maternity leave isn’t merely a “benefit”, but crucial for mother and child.



Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz. Photo courtesy of MMA.

KUALA LUMPUR, August 7 — The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) today called for a minimum 98 days’ paid maternity leave for the public service to match the entitlement in the private sector.

The doctors’ group urged the Public Service Department (JPA) to review its general order, as paid maternity leave for civil servants is set at a minimum of 60 days, up to a maximum of 90 days.

Under the [2022 amendment of the Employment Act 1955](#) that covers all private sector employees in peninsular Malaysia and Labuan – which came into force on January 1, 2023 – minimum full-pay maternity leave entitlement was increased from 60 to 98 days, matching international labour standards. No maximum is set.

“This is a fantastic move that the MMA supports,” MMA president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz said in a statement.

“Unfortunately, this causes double standards between the public and private sectors, as seen in this current case, civil servants may get 38 days of maternity leave less than their counterparts in the private sector.

“Maternity protection is a human right enshrined in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Best practices has seen it set at 98 days (14 weeks). It is not merely a benefit, but a crucial period for the health and wellbeing of both mother and child.”

Public Service director-general Wan Ahmad Dahlan Abdul Aziz said [yesterday](#) that the Hulu Langat district health office’s (PKD) decision to cut maternity leave for medical officers in all 15 public health clinics in the district from 90 to 60 days did not violate maternity leave regulations for the civil service.

He explained that the minimum maternity leave entitlement in the public sector is mandated at 60 days per birth, with the maximum set at 90 days.

Health Minister Dzulkefly Ahmad yesterday [reversed Hulu Langat PKD’s decision](#) and reinstated 90-day maternity leave, after massive public backlash to the [Selangor state health department’s statement last Saturday](#) that defended the shortened maternity leave of 60 days for women doctors in Klinik Kesihatan in Hulu Langat.

MMA explained that a shorter maternity leave period undermines the essential recovery time needed by new mothers and compromises the critical early bonding period between mother and infant, which is fundamental to the child’s development and the mother’s mental health.

“The decision disregards the well-established benefits of the standard 98-day maternity leave, which include adequate physical recovery from childbirth, support for successful breastfeeding, and the mitigation of postpartum depression,” MMA said.

“Reducing this period not only puts undue stress on our dedicated medical officers but also potentially impacts the quality of care they can provide upon returning to work prematurely.”

Kuala Langat MP Dr Ahmad Yunus Hairi, who is also the head of Perikatan Nasional’s (PN) health committee, has [similarly told the government](#) to increase minimum paid maternity leave entitlement to 98 days for the civil service to avoid “double standards” between the public and private sectors.

Although MMA thanked Dzulkefly for promptly resolving the issue affecting women doctors at the Hulu Langat Klinik Kesihatan, MMA highlighted the need for improvements within the Ministry of Health’s (MOH) human resources department.

“It has become evident that many challenges in the health care system stem from inadequate human resources planning. Despite the Health Minister’s commitment to enhancing the welfare of healthcare workers, there remains a disconnect at the operational level concerning the needs of the workforce, as demonstrated by this recent incident,” Dr Azizan said.

“As part of measures towards better planning of health care human resources, we once again urge the Health Ministry to consider MMA’s proposal for digitalised mapping of human resources – a step we believe will significantly help address the uneven workforce distribution in public health care seen throughout the country.”