

## **FAQs about the Proposed Domestic Partner Benefits Ordinance in Cleveland**

### ***What will the proposed domestic partner benefits ordinance do?***

The domestic partner benefits ordinance will provide health, dental and prescription drug coverage, sick leave and funeral leave, death benefits, and health care benefits for a surviving partner and dependents of employees killed in the line of duty for domestic partners registered with the City of Cleveland's Domestic Partner Registry. To register, two adults of the same or opposite sex must affirm that they share responsibility for each other's common welfare. The ordinance will also extend the city's anti-nepotism policies to domestic partners and their families.

### ***Why are domestic partner benefits important?***

Roughly 80% of non-elderly insured people in the U.S. obtain insurance through their job or the job of a family member, typically a spouse. Unmarried couples are 2-3 times more likely to be uninsured than married people -- 20% of people in same sex relationships and 32% of people in opposite sex relationships are uninsured. Typically, when domestic partner benefits are offered, the number of uninsured people in unmarried couples declines by 30-43%.

Moreover, benefits are an important part of a person's pay with estimates varying from 33-40% of the value of total compensation. Thus, same-sex couples who are unable to marry are not getting equal pay for equal work.

### ***Will the cost of domestic partner benefits be prohibitive for Cleveland?***

Experience and studies suggest that benefit enrollment rises 0.1% to 0.3% for same sex couples and 1.3% to 1.8% for unmarried opposite sex couples. Benefit costs on average rise just 1.4% to 2.1% when coverage is offered to all unmarried couples, and one study showed that 85% of private and public employers saw no increase in their health care costs because of their domestic partner benefit programs.

There is also a cost for not providing domestic partner benefits. A survey in *Human Resources Management* ranked domestic partner benefits as the most effective recruiting incentive for executives and the third most effective recruiting incentive for managers and line workers. As more employers institute fair workplace policies, employees have more options for choosing an inclusive work environment and those that offer domestic partner benefits are at a competitive advantage. In addition, employees are more productive when they are not concerned about healthcare for their partners, and the city avoids back end costs when uninsured people get sick.

### ***Will domestic partner benefits expose Cleveland to litigation if there is a dispute over the termination of a domestic partnership?***

The domestic partner registry sets forth a mechanism for one or both domestic partners to terminate the partnership. The City of Cleveland is not involved in making any legal or subjective determinations as to whether a partnership has terminated.

### ***What happens to the domestic partner benefits when an employee is terminated?***

The domestic partner of an employee will be treated the same as a spouse if employment is terminated, and COBRA benefits offered to spouses will be offered to domestic partners.

### ***If domestic partner benefits are important, why don't more gay and lesbian people sign up for them when offered?***

Many same sex partners are already covered by health insurance in their job. In addition, domestic partner benefits (unlike spousal benefits) are taxed by the federal government as income, increasing the cost of domestic partner benefits to same sex couples. Also, some employees fear discrimination if they inform their employer of their sexual orientation.

### ***Are domestic partners more likely to be sick than spouses?***

The Williams Institute of the UCLA School of Law found no meaningful difference in the health status between married people and people in same-sex or opposite-sex unmarried couples. Other studies show that coverage for domestic partners is no more costly than coverage for spouses or other dependents.

### ***How widespread are domestic partner benefits?***

21 states and over 200 local governments, 83 Fortune 100 companies, 293 Fortune 500 companies, 404 Fortune 1000 companies, and approximately 4000 other private companies, non-profits and unions provide health insurance and other benefits to their employees' domestic partners. In Ohio, Columbus, Cleveland Heights, Franklin County, and Lucas County offer domestic partner benefits. Some City of Cleveland examples are listed below:

Case Western Reserve University; Cleveland State University; Fairview Hospital; AmTrust Bank; Cleveland Clinic Foundation; Directed Decisions, Inc.; Eaton Corp.; Ireland Cancer Center; Jones, Day, Reavis & Pogue; KeyCorp, Lutheran Hospital, MacDonald Women's Hospital, Penton Media, Inc.; Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital; Squire, Sanders & Dempsey, LLP; Thompson Hine, LLP; Ulmer & Berne, LLP; United Church Board Homeland; University Hospitals of Cleveland.

For a more complete list, go to  
[http://www.hrc.org/issues/workplace/benefits/domestic\\_partner\\_benefits.htm](http://www.hrc.org/issues/workplace/benefits/domestic_partner_benefits.htm)