

Parliamentary reply by DPM Teo Chee Hean on parents' sick leave entitlements for childcare

THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT OF SINGAPORE
WRITTEN ANSWER
MONDAY, 11 SEP 2017

Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang:

To ask the Prime Minister whether the Ministry will consider allowing parents to use their paid sick leave entitlement to care for their sick children or allowing this at least for parents of premature, multiple births or babies with congenital illness.

Mr Teo Chee Hean (for the Prime Minister):

The Government is strongly committed to supporting Singaporeans in their aspirations to get married and have children. We empathise with parents who face challenges in looking after children who require more care, and will look into ways to better support them.

Mr Ng has suggested allowing parents to tap on their own paid sick leave entitlement to care for their sick children. Paid sick leave allows an employee to access medical care and recuperate, while protecting his employment status and income during the period of illness. If sick leave is used to also care for children, parents might be caught in difficult situations when they themselves fall ill and have insufficient sick leave to recuperate.

In addition, from the employers' perspective, allowing one leave type to be used for another purpose amounts to increasing overall leave utilisation for selected employees. Therefore, apart from the impact on manpower and operational costs for employers, we should be mindful of the possible impact of such a proposal on the employability of employees with caregiving responsibilities.

Although the number of parents with preterm and multiple births or babies with congenital illnesses remains small, we will seriously consider how we can better support such parents with greater caregiving needs, in addition to existing parental leave provisions which have also been progressively enhanced. I made the same point in my reply to Mr Ng's Adjournment Motion last month on extending parental leave for parents with preterm babies and multiple births.