

Raising the Age Threshold for Parental Leave to Support College Students Balancing College and Parenthood

- A total of 97 laws, including the Higher Education Act, coming into effect in April

Starting in April, the age threshold of children for parental leave will be raised and urgent undercover investigations will be possible for digital sex crimes targeting children and youth. The Ministry of Government Legislation (Minister Lee Wan-kyu) announced that a total of 97 statutes will come into effect in April. Some of the key details and enforcement dates of the forthcoming statutes are as follows.

Support for Undergraduate Students Balancing College and Parenting (「HIGHER EDUCATION ACT」, April 23)

If a college student wants to take a leave of absence for childcare purposes, previously the child had to be 8 years old or younger or in the second grade or lower of elementary school, but from April 23, this will be raised to 12 years old or younger or in the sixth grade or lower of elementary school. College students will also be able to take a parental leave from their studies if their child needs long-term medical treatment and convalescence due to a physical or mental disorder, as long as the child is 16 years old or younger or in the first grade or lower of high school. This amendment is designed to support undergraduate students balancing college and parenting.

This change will also apply to those who are already on parental leave when the new law comes into force, allowing them to delay their return to university or college.

Urgent Undercover Investigations into Digital Sex Offenses against Children and Youth (「ACT ON THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH AGAINST SEX OFFENSES」, April 17)

Following the reinforcement of the punishment to three years' imprisonment or more for intimidating a child or youth and five years' imprisonment or more for coercion with sexual exploitation materials using deep fake, which came into force on 16 October 2024, a statutory basis has been established to allow detectives to conduct an urgent undercover investigation into a digital sex offenses against children or youth without prior approval from a higher-level police agency when required. Furthermore, when detectives find that sexual exploitation materials of a child or youth are being posted, displayed, or distributed online, they must immediately request the Korea Communications Standards Commission to take such measures as deleting or blocking access.

Strengthening Support for Victims of Digital Sex Crimes, Including Illegal Videos and Photos (「SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND VICTIMS PROTECTION ACT」, April 17)

Starting on April 17, the “Advocacy Center for Online Sexual Abuse Victims (A.C.O.S.A.V.)” will be established and operated nationwide to receive reports of illegal videos and photos and provide emergency counseling. At the same time, the responsibility for supporting the deletion of illegal videos and photos will be extended from the State government to local governments, and support for victims in their

return to daily life will be specified as the responsibility of the State and local governments. In addition, the law allows the State and local governments to support the deletion of not only illegal videos and photos but also victim's identifying information to prevent the further harm caused by circulation of victim's identifying information. This information includes the victim's address, name, age, occupation, education, appearance, and other personal information and photographs that can be used to identify the victim.

Designation of Restricted Areas Only Allowed for Low-Emission Motor Vehicles (「SPECIAL ACT ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF AIR QUALITY IN AIR CONTROL ZONES」, April 23)

Starting on April 23, provincial governors like mayors and *Do* governors will be able to designate areas where only low-emission vehicles can be driven. Only low-emission vehicles referred to in the Clear Air Conservation Act, such as electric vehicles, solar-powered vehicles, hydrogen electric vehicles and hybrid vehicles, or vehicles whose air pollutant emission levels meet the standards set by municipal ordinances, are allowed to operate in the low-emission areas. However, the vehicles that are stipulated in the Enforcement Decree of the Special Act on the Improvement of Air Quality in Air Control Zones, including emergency vehicles referred to in Article 22 (2) of the Road Traffic Act, such as fire engines and ambulances, and vehicles that have been issued with a mark of cars used by persons with disabilities pursuant to Article 39 of the Act on Welfare of Persons with Disabilities, are permitted to operate in the low-emission areas despite not being classified as low-emission vehicles. A person who violates this regulation and operates the vehicle that is not allowed to be operated in the low-emission areas is subject to an administrative fine of 100,000 won.

The reasons for the enactment of the new statutes, including those stated above, can be found at the Korean Law Information Center (www.law.go.kr).

(Unofficial Translation)

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