

# Humareso Outlines 2026 HR Compliance Priorities as States Lead the Way

*AI in hiring, pay transparency, paid leave, and wage changes top employers' list.*

# HUMARESO

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-- As employers prepare for another year of rapid regulatory change, [Humareso](#) has outlined the key HR compliance priorities for 2026, with a sharp focus on state and local activity in areas such as AI in hiring, pay transparency, paid family leave, and wage and hour rules.

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Humareso*

“We like to call this bringing compliance to life in the HR world,” said John Baldino, President of Humareso. “These areas are going to require software updates, handbook updates, and poster updates. It's not just theory. It's day-to-day operations.”

## AI in Hiring: Human Oversight Required

Baldino and Humareso compliance expert Joel Riley emphasized in a recent [webinar](#) that artificial intelligence in talent acquisition is now under scrutiny similar to that of

background checks a decade ago, particularly in states such as New York, California, Illinois, and Colorado.

Requirements emerging from these jurisdictions include:

- Bias audits for automated hiring tools
- Candidate disclosures when AI is used in screening or ranking
- Recordkeeping and privacy obligations tied to AI-driven decisions
- Alignment with EEOC/Title VII standards to avoid disparate impact

“If it's going to make people decisions, it needs human oversight,” said Riley. “We can't just turn AI loose and have it take over because it does things quicker, faster, and easier. There are humans involved, and all of the laws, guidelines, and best practices still apply.”

Baldino noted that most current legislation is concentrated on recruitment and initial hiring decisions, not yet on internal promotions.

“You’ve got to be able to defend that a hiring decision is not made primarily or exclusively because of what AI is telling you,” he said.

### Pay Transparency and Pay Equity

More than 15 jurisdictions now require salary ranges in job postings and impose strict record-retention rules for compensation data. States including California, New York, Hawaii, and Illinois have range-posting requirements, with some requiring employers to keep copies of postings and range documentation for five or more years.

Baldino cautioned employers against relying on experience-based exceptions that no longer hold up under newer laws.

“We hear, ‘Well, it’s going to depend on how much experience they have.’ No. It isn’t, not if you are compelled by law,” he said. “What the courts will keep saying is: the role is worth what the role is worth. That’s what they’ll keep coming back to.”

They also stressed that pay transparency does not replace pay equity analysis, including regression analyses across protected classes to identify and address disparities.

### Paid Family Leave and Sensitive Leave Categories

Humareso highlighted the expansion and evolution of paid family and medical leave programs across more than a dozen states, along with newer protected leave categories such as reproductive loss, domestic violence, and stalking.

“These are deeply personal experiences for employees,” said Riley. “As employers and HR practitioners, it’s important for us to approach them with empathy, clarity, and consistency in our policies, while also respecting state statutes that now require particular protections.”

Baldino urges organizations to revisit how employees can use accrued PTO and sick time in conjunction with these new leave categories and to apply policies consistently across managers and locations.

### Wage & Hour, Tipped Work, and Multi-State Risk

Looking ahead to 2026, Humareso expects continued increases in minimum wage, with more than 20 states projected to exceed \$15 per hour and sector-specific rates, such as fast food, in some jurisdictions. Several states and cities are also tightening or eliminating tip credits and expanding coverage for agricultural and domestic workers.

With remote and hybrid work now common, Baldino and Riley underscore that the “situs of work”—where the employee actually works—drives compliance obligations, regardless of employer headquarters.

“You may have a Florida home office, but remote employees in Connecticut, New York, and Illinois,” said Riley. “The laws in those states apply.”

### From Reactive to Proactive

At both the federal and state levels, Humareso sees regulators shifting from reactive enforcement to proactive oversight, including audits of pay transparency, AI use, and wage practices.

“Compliance is really moving from a reactive body to a proactive body,” said Riley. “To document, to educate, and to anticipate, that’s critical in 2026. The same law may apply differently to three different businesses. Anticipation and proactiveness are what will keep you out of trouble.”

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