

Testimony on HB 3390

House Committee on Business and Labor

Roberta Weber, Ph.D.
Faculty Research Associate, Oregon State University

Madame Chair, Vice-Chairs, and Members of the Committee, I am Bobbie Weber, a Faculty Research Associate in the Family Policy Program at Oregon State University. I am here today testifying on the importance of sick leave to employed parents, especially low-wage employees.

A major portion of my research focuses on child care and early education with a lot of attention on low-income families. The majority of parents with young children are employed and when their children get sick they have no good options if they don't have access to paid sick time. Organized child care facilities such as centers and family child care businesses do not allow sick children to attend. Although communities have experimented with sick child care solutions, the vast majority fail. One of the reasons they fail is that children want to be with their parents when they are sick and parents want to be the ones to care for a sick child. So despite what appears to be a good business model, sick child care programs do not have enough enrolled children to stay in business.

All parents struggle with meeting the needs of both their children and their employer when a child is sick, but parents in low-wage jobs have extra challenges. Their absence in order to care for a sick child will certainly decrease the family income in the short run, making it hard to make ends meet. It may also threaten their long-term financial security, because missing work to care for a sick child can mean the loss of their job. The consequences of lost income and lost jobs can be devastating for families. This is an even greater problem in rural areas in which both employment opportunities and child care options are fewer than in more urban communities.

Employed parents are an important part of Oregon's workforce. We need these workers to be successful at work and as parents. Paid sick leave increases parent success in both spheres. Paid sick leave is good for children, families, and communities.