

February 4, 2016

To: House Business and Labor Committee

From: Dana Visse

Re: Support of HB 4088

Dear Chair Holvey and Committee Members,

My name is Dana Visse. Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective (in writing, since I can't be at the hearing in person) about workplace discrimination based on familial status. This is an issue that's hidden, it's not talked about enough and yet affects families directly and with significant impact. Families like mine.

For six years, I worked for a planning firm. For the first three years, I worked full time, received excellent reviews, and steadily gained responsibility. After my first unpaid maternity leave, I asked to work an 80% schedule, with Fridays off. My work agreed and I kept this schedule for another 2 years. My performance reviews remained excellent. After getting pregnant with my second son, I asked to work 24/hrs. a week, or 60%, to care for my son while my husband worked. Again, they agreed.

But then, at the end of my unpaid maternity leave, I was laid off with no warning and no explanation other than that there was no work for me. A few days later, I learned that another woman, not a mother, was hired and moved into the space I had vacated, doing very similar work.

I believe that my being mother and my request to work a flexible schedule in order to accommodate my caregiving responsibilities led to my termination. I was not given the choice to continue working my old schedule. Instead, assumptions were made about my work commitment, regardless of performance, just because I had caregiving responsibilities.

The loss of my job with no valid explanation was very difficult for me and has changed the course of my work life. The blow to my ability to earn a living and contribute to supporting my family was significant and, these days, losing one income in a household that depends on two can be financially devastating.

Please support legislative policies, like this proposal, that support workers who also have family caregiving commitments. This type of discrimination may be hidden but it is very real and has very real consequences for families.

Thank you.