



March 23, 2017

Dear Chair Lively and members of the House Early Childhood and Family Supports Committee,

We write today to express our strong support for HB 3087, the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act. As the grassroots arm of the women's movement, the National Organization for Women (NOW) takes action through intersectional grassroots activism to promote feminist ideals, lead societal change, eliminate discrimination, and achieve and protect the equal rights of all women and girls in all aspects of social, political, and economic life. This testimony is submitted on behalf of the state chapter, Oregon NOW, and four local chapters from across Oregon: Central Oregon Coast NOW, Greater Portland NOW, High Desert NOW, and South Willamette Valley NOW.

NOW chapters in Oregon support HB 3087 because we all need time to care for our families. Providing care for a new baby, a sick spouse, or an elderly parent shouldn't compromise one's economic security. Yet without universal policies like paid family leave, women face real barriers to staying in the workforce and maintaining earnings when family caregiving needs arise. This unmet need for paid leave is nearly twice as great among women, workers of color, unmarried workers, and low-wage workers.

The United States is the only advanced economy without paid maternity leave and one of only a handful without paid leave for fathers or those who care for seriously ill family members. Even unpaid leave is not accessible to many. As a result of employer size, job tenure, or part-time work status, nearly 40 percent of the workforce is excluded from laws protecting unpaid leave, including the Oregon Family Leave Act (OFLA) and the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

Four states, California, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and New York, already have established some form of paid family leave. With the passage of HB 3087, Oregon can be next. House Bill 3087 creates a paid family and medical leave insurance program that ensures paid time away from work for every Oregonian to welcome a new child, to recover from a serious illness, or to care for a loved one recovering from a serious illness. HB 3087 also includes an expanded definition of family member to better capture the nature of today's family structures and relationships.

We urge you to support HB 2649. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Lisa Frack for the Oregon state chapter of the National Organization for Women (Oregon NOW)*

*Sheila Swinford for Central Oregon Coast NOW*

*Bud Feules for Greater Portland NOW*

*TeriAnn Mason for High Desert NOW*

*Laurie Notaro for South Willamette Valley NOW*