



March 23, 2017

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

On behalf of Basic Rights Oregon, we respectfully request your support for HB 3087, the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act. Basic Rights Oregon works to ensure that all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Oregonians experience equality. This legislation is an important step in ensuring all Oregonians can take care of their families.

Whether it's the birth of a child, the serious illness of a spouse, or the end-of-life for a parent, we all need time to care for our families. Caring for a family member is important work, and shouldn't mean losing wages or compromising our economic security. Our workplace and public policies have not kept pace with the growing number of families with all available adults in the workforce.

House Bill 3087 will create a paid family and medical leave insurance program that ensures every working Oregonian will have paid time away from work 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 inclusive definition of family, defined in this bill as blood or affinity, which better allows this policy to capture all family structures.

This inclusive definition of family is critical because current workplace and economic policy doesn't recognize nearly 80 percent of American families, including many LGBTQ families. While the LGBTQ movement successfully achieved nationwide marriage equality in 2015, LGBTQ individuals and families continue to experience the collateral consequences of narrow family definitions in local, state, and federal policy and would gain significantly from more inclusive definitions of family in workplace leave policies.

Many LGBTQ individuals forge close relationships with friends and support networks--known as chosen families--because LGBTQ individuals continue to face stigma and rejection within their biological families and communities. These relationships become paramount when needing to take time off from work to recover from illness or care for sick loved ones.

We strongly encourage your support for HB 3087, the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act with an inclusive definition of family.

Sincerely,

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is "Nancy Haque" and the second is "Amy Herzfeld-Copple".

Nancy Haque & Amy Herzfeld-Copple
Co-Executive Directors