

March 23, 2017

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

On behalf of the American Federation of Teachers-Oregon, I respectfully request your support for HB 3087, the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act. AFT-Oregon represents approximately 15,000 Oregon workers in community college and universities in faculty, graduate employee, and classified positions, K-12 classified positions, and child care workers. They interact with Oregon's families every day and they care deeply about their own families and communities.

Oregon families need time to care. 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 is important work, and shouldn't mean 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. We are not adequately addressing the fact that, as a result of demographic shifts, more seniors will require more family caregiving in the near-term.

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) or the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Studies show that even when people are eligible for unpaid leave they often cannot afford to take it. In a national report, just under 80 percent of eligible workers who did not take FMLA leave said that they would have had it been paid.

This unmet need for paid leave is nearly twice as great among women, workers of color, unmarried workers, and low-wage workers than among their respective counterparts. Women of color, in particular, are more likely than their white counterparts to be a single head-of-household, where the needs for both family care and stable income are greater. For higher income women, having a baby can mean a big career setback and loss of earnings. But for low-income working moms, the loss of compensation and/or secure employment can have devastating economic impacts. Nearly a quarter of new moms are returning to work within two weeks of having a baby because they cannot survive without a paycheck, or worry that if they take too long they might not have a job to go back to.

AFT-Oregon supports the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act because our members care about the families they support every day. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony support of House Bill 3087, the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act. We urge your yes vote.

Sincerely,



Marcus Swift  
Director of Political and Legislative Affairs  
AFT-Oregon