



So all families can thrive.

March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017  
House Committee on Early Childhood and Family Support

**RE: Support for House Bill 3087, Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act**

Dear Chair Lively and members of the committee,

I respectfully ask you to pass House Bill 3087, the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act, and include the definition of “family member” as “anyone related by blood or affinity,” used by the federal government. The nuclear family definition used in OFLA leaves my family behind.

I was born and raised in Malaysia, and immigrated to the U.S. so that I could safely express my sexual orientation, gender identity and political beliefs. With my blood family 8,000 miles away, I have created a strong chosen family in Portland, Oregon. My chosen family celebrated with me when I became a US citizen 4 years ago, and took care of me when I was recovering from my gender transition surgeries. They are named in my living will and my healthcare directives.

When I was diagnosed with Stage II cancer in April of 2016, I underwent chemotherapy treatments for 3-4 hours per day for five months, followed by 2 surgeries, and radiation every day for six weeks. Now, thankfully, I am cancer free, but I continue to be in recovery from the many side effects from my treatments.

It was challenging for me to go through cancer treatments and maintain an income. I am self-employed. If I don't work I do not get paid. In HB 3087, self-employed people could opt into the program. I cut back on work completely when I had surgeries. Now, I am working, but the lingering side effects of chemotherapy and radiation make my normal work take four to five times longer. If I had access to paid family and medical leave insurance, it would have alleviated the financial burden and allowed me to focus on my recovery.

During my treatment, my Portland chosen family cared for me physically and emotionally. They took time off to stay with me in the hospital, and to care for me while I recovered. They helped me sort through medical information, and were my advocates when hospital staff repeatedly misunderstood my gender identity and referred to me by the wrong gender pronouns. Having them by my side helped me navigate the overwhelming emotional burden of fighting cancer.

During the 2015 legislative session, before my cancer diagnosis, I told you my story as part of the effort to include an expansive family definition in Oregon's paid sick time law. Unfortunately, Oregon lawmakers decided not to include a family definition that reflects my family in that law. Now, we have another chance. I urge you to pass paid family and medical leave in Oregon and define “family member” as related by blood or affinity.

Thank you,  
Yee Won Chong  
Member of the Board of Directors, Forward Together

1440 Broadway, Suite 301, Oakland, CA 94612 T: 510.663.8300 F: 510.663.8301

Oakland, CA ▪ Albuquerque, NM ▪ Portland, OR

[info@forwardtogether.org](mailto:info@forwardtogether.org) [www.forwardtogether.org](http://www.forwardtogether.org) [@fwdtogether](https://twitter.com/fwdtogether) [f /fwdtogether](https://facebook.com/fwdtogether)



So all families can thrive.

1440 Broadway, Suite 301, Oakland, CA 94612 T: 510.663.8300 F: 510.663.8301  
Oakland, CA ▪ Albuquerque, NM ▪ Brooklyn, NY ▪ Portland, OR  
[info@forwardtogether.org](mailto:info@forwardtogether.org) [www.forwardtogether.org](http://www.forwardtogether.org) [@fwdtogether](https://twitter.com/fwdtogether) [f /fwdtogether](https://www.facebook.com/fwdtogether)