

Kate Brown
Governor



Oregon Commission for Women
“Advocating Equality and Diversity”
1819 SW 5th Ave., Portland, OR 97201
O 503.302.9725/F 503.473.8519
Email: oaco.mail@oregon.gov
Website:
www.oregon.gov/Wome

Testimony in support of HB 3087
March 23, 2017, Hearing Room D, 1:00 pm
House Committee on Early Childhood and Family Supports

Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Hack and Piluso and Representatives Bynum, Hayden, Huffman, Keny-Guyer, Malstrom, and Smith:

The Oregon Commission for Women strongly supports HB 3087. Establishing a paid family and medical leave insurance program is an important step in the pursuit of equity and dignity in both the workplace and the home. The program benefits individuals, families, employers, and the state government.

Caring for a family can mean losing wages or compromising economic security. The United States is the only developed country—and one of just three countries worldwide—without a national paid maternity leave policy. We do not offer paid leave for fathers, those who need time to recover from illness or injury, or those who provide care to seriously ill family members. Working to offset the national picture, four states—California, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and New York—have established some form of paid family leave. HB 3087 uses best practices from these states to create a paid family and medical insurance program that ensures working Oregonians will have paid time away from work to care for a newborn or adopted child, for themselves in the case of a serious illness or injury, or for a family member.

Support for caregiving is particularly important in Oregon. According to the Women’s Foundation of Oregon, caregiving costs in Oregon are among the least affordable in the United States. In fact, the average cost of daycare in Oregon is more expensive than annual tuition at a state university, and elder care costs run upward of \$45,000 a year.

This legislation addresses paid leave as an important equity issue. The unmet need for paid leave is nearly twice as great among women, workers of color, unmarried workers, and low wage workers as among their respective counterparts. In addition, the expanded definition of family member in HB 3087 covers the realistic nature of family structures and relationships present in our society.

The benefits of a paid family and medical leave program are multi-faceted:

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- Women provide most unpaid caregiving for children and family members; they are also more likely to face barriers to remaining in the workforce and maintaining their earnings during periods of caregiving. This program helps to alleviate wage and wealth gaps for women and their families.
- Men deserve time to bond with and support their families as caregivers. Only 14 percent of employers nation-wide offer paid paternity leave. Paternity leave can promote parent-child bonding, improve outcomes for children, and increase gender equity at home and in the workplace. This program establishes an equal playing field for both women and men.
- Employee benefit programs like paid family and medical leave increase employee engagement and loyalty while decreasing attrition, thereby reducing employer costs.
- Paid family and medical leave reduces government spending on public assistance, increases labor force participation, and grows consumer spending.

The Oregon Commission for Women believes the proposed family and medical leave insurance program ensures that caring for a family becomes an economic and workplace right for all working Oregonians. We strongly support HB 3087.

On behalf of the Oregon Commission for Women,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kimberly Olson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "O".

Kimberly Olson, Vice Chair, Oregon Commission for Women