



March 23, 2017

To: Chair Lively and Members of the House Committee on Early Childhood and Family Supports

Fr: Steven Demarest

Re: Support for House Bill 3087

Chair Lively and Members of the Committee,

My name is Steve Demarest, and I am the President of SEIU Local 503. I am appearing here today in support of House Bill 3087, the Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) Act. On behalf of the more than 65,000 workers represented by SEIU Locals 503 and 49 here in the state of Oregon I am pleased to offer this testimony in support of a bill that will offer Oregon families much needed help.

Currently just over 1 in 10 American workers have access to some form of paid family leave.<sup>1</sup> When a worker does not have access to leave, they are left without an important safety net to deal with critical life events like the birth of a child or illness in the family. This forces an impossible choice for many workers to make between keeping a roof over their head and providing care for their families.

Nobody should lose all the income their family relies upon or risk losing their job when they are welcoming a new baby into their lives, taking care of a seriously ill family member or are seriously ill or injured and need time to recover. We need policies that recognizes these critical life events happen to all of us, and one that supports families financially when they need to provide or receive family care.

While currently the federal and state laws due protect workers for family leave, they do not cover everyone – even with job protection, and they also do not provide a path to replace income. We believe that House Bill 3087 would help remedy this.

Here are some stories from everyday Oregonians who struggle keeping up with life events due to a lack of paid family and medical leave.

- Julie Markiewicz, a coding auditor at Kaiser and member of SEIU local 49 was injured in motorcycle accident. She needed her family by her side while she was in and out of a coma. Although her husband and son both qualified for unpaid medical leave under

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dol.gov/wb/media/DC%20Paid%20Leave%20Literature%20Reviews.pdf>

OFLA, they were unable to afford to take more than a few days off work, leaving her alone for long periods of time during a traumatic time.

- Ashley Garber, a CNA at a skilled nursing facility, gave birth to her daughter, Charlotte, in June of 2016. Ashley and her partner, also a CNA, had to save for months, not just for the things that their new baby would need but to be able to fund her maternity leave. Normally, unpaid maternity leave is 12 weeks, however Ashley went back to work part-time after only 8 weeks and had to start providing child care in her home just to be able to afford the time she took off to be with her newborn. With paid family leave, Ashley would have been able to stay home with her infant for the time they both needed and to fully recover from her c-section.
- Brandi Morrigan, from Portland, a worker at the Department of Human Services, suffers from several autoimmune disorders. This often means that her illnesses are more lengthy and intense than you or I would face. Additionally, she faced a difficult pregnancy in spring of 2016 that required several missed days of work in order to monitor both her health and her baby's. With her current private-pay short-term disability policy she was only able to take 8 weeks off, still at an immense financial hardship. As a result her family often has to ration food at the end of the month to make it to their next paycheck.

It doesn't have to be this way — and it shouldn't be this way, for the working families across our state,

At SEIU, we are also concerned that Oregon is not adequately addressing the fact that, as a result of demographic shifts, more seniors will require more family caregiving in the near-term. This bill is an important recognition of the increasing demands being placed on families as they work to care for elders.

I urge you to join us in supporting House Bill 3087, it is time to recognize that our workplace and public policies have not kept pace with the growing number of families who have all available adults in the workforce.