



So all families can thrive.

March 23rd, 2017

House Committee on Early Childhood and Family Support

Testimony of Aubrey Daquiz

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

Chair Lively and members of the committee,

Thank you for having me. My name is Aubrey Daquiz. I am a Portland resident, and a volunteer with Forward Together. I am here to support House Bill 3087, including the expanded definition of family as “related by blood or affinity.” This is the definition used by the federal government to regulate federal employees’ paid leave. All families need paid family and medical leave to thrive, regardless of who they call family.

The traditional family definition used in policies like the Oregon Family Leave Act, defines family member as parent, spouse, child, or grandparent despite the fact that most families are structured differently today. The 2010 census found that nearly 80% of Americans do not fit the nuclear family model. Rather our families are blended, multi-generational, or chosen, and may include adult siblings, or unmarried partners. This is particularly true for families of color, immigrant families, and LGBTQ families.

I am the child of Filipino immigrants who both died from cancer within the past 2 years. My mom was recruited into the U.S. armed forces and served our country for 20 years. Because the military quickly moved us away from my blood relatives, I grew up with chosen family--a group of “aunties and uncles” who came from the same province as my parents. We spent holidays, summers, and most weekends together throughout my childhood.

In February 2014, my mom was diagnosed with Stage IV cancer. I cobbled together limited leave time to take her to appointments and help care for her. A year later, my mom was fairly stable when my dad was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer and died just weeks later. Some of our chosen family was unable to take leave to be there. On top of my own pain, my heart broke for them knowing they couldn’t visit my father on his death bed, or my mother on hers just a few short weeks ago. When your loved ones are sick or dying, the last thing Oregonians should have to worry about is whether or not they are legally related.

Oregon legislators had the opportunity to include an expansive family definition in the paid sick days law of 2015 and chose not to, leaving many of our families behind. As you may remember, Yee Won Chong shared his testimony in favor of expansive family definition then. Yee Won is an immigrant from Malaysia who moved to the US to safely express his gender identity and sexual orientation. He built a network of chosen family in Portland since his birth family was 8,000 miles away. Despite not being covered by Oregon's paid sick days law, Yee Won's chosen family supported him through chemo, surgeries and radiation when he was diagnosed with Stage II cancer last year.

Yee Won can't be here today because he is in Boston recovering from the lingering side effects of cancer treatment, where his chosen family is better situated to care for him. If Yee Won and his family had access to paid family and medical leave, he might have been able to recover here at home. Please support HB 3087 and expanded family definition so all Oregon families can support their loved ones when they are in most need. Thank you.

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