



Testimony in support of HB 3087

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My name is Alice Gates. I am an Associate Professor of Social Work at the University of Portland, and I am here to testify in strong support of HB 3087.

For the last six months I have been conducting research with my students on the need for Paid Family and Medical Leave in our state.

We interviewed 20 women in Multnomah, Washington, and Marion Counties about their experiences of needing time off from work to care for a family member. We focused on populations whose experiences are not well represented in policy debates on paid leave: low-wage workers, immigrants, and African American women.

Our preliminary findings show that the lack of access to paid leave leads women and families to experience **emotional and financial stress** during an already stressful time—after the birth of a baby or during the illness of a family member.

One interviewee whose husband was employed in a nursery described her experience following a C-section. During her recovery, she was preoccupied by her family's finances when her husband took 5 days of unpaid leave to care for her and their other children. She described being worried about the lost wages on that one paycheck, stating, "When the rent comes due and the bills, you wonder—'what will I do?'—you grow more desperate, and that makes you more depressed."

These comments reveal the level of economic vulnerability and distress experienced by low-wage workers when they miss even a few days of paid work.

Others described having to borrow money to make ends meet to compensate for lost income. The debts were difficult to pay off and generated even more worries for parents.

One interviewee from Portland, a single mother, explained that after she gave birth, she needed more time off than her employer would allow. She quit her job at a local distribution center for a department store and reluctantly applied for TANF, where she received \$427/month in cash assistance—roughly one-fourth of her take-home pay when she was working. She supplemented this income with food stamps, housing assistance, energy assistance, and visits to food pantries.

Our findings point to the need for a paid family and medical leave program in Oregon that responds specifically to the needs of **low-wage workers, immigrants, and people of color**, who are essential members of our communities and make crucial contributions to Oregon's economy.

Thank you for your work on this issue. I urge you to support HB 3087.