

Chair Lively and members of the House Committee on Early Childhood and Family Supports,

When my first son was born, I took two weeks to spend at home. Most of that time was spent with visiting family. Only a few days were reserved to be spent alone with my family to figure out our new way of life. It was not enough time to recognize or understand the kind of support that my wife needed from me. I was working long hours, and only five hours of waking cohabitation a day is not enough to offer any real support, emotional or otherwise, to my wife and child. It was a difficult year. Three years later I was blessed with three months of paid family leave for the birth of my second son. The experience has been totally different. It has been wonderful being able to spend more time with my older son, and to be more active as a role model for him. I can't imagine what it would have been like to add another child to our family without being there to help the older child adjust to his new world. I'm so glad that I was able to share the challenge of caring for a brand new baby and a very emotional three year old with my wife. Nobody should be expected to do so much all by themselves. Without having paid family leave, I wouldn't appreciate how frustrating it can be to work so hard and not manage to leave the house, or to be so exhausted that you can't think straight anymore. I wouldn't really know who my wife was without the experience of walking in her shoes a little. She's an amazing human being. Those three months have changed my life forever. Today my family is closer and stronger, and I am a better husband and father because of the time afforded to me by my gracious employer. I'm strongly in favor of bill hb 3087 and my employer, Peoria Gardens, has my loyalty for life. Offering paid family leave shows that they care about the difficulties of raising children. Women who work in the home with a new child are rarely recognized for the isolation and stress that they are expected to endure, and the effects of post partem depression can be devastating. Paid family leave is a great step towards providing families with the opportunity to be their own support system when no help can be provided by other family members. My wife and I have no family living in Oregon, and this has been a great help to us.

-Nico Ardans

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