

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

My name is Pamela Kislak. Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective on paid family and medical leave today. This issue is very personal to me.

Last year, the day after Thanksgiving, I suffered a major seizure that landed in me in the hospital for a month, and necessitated surgery for a brain tumor. Clearly this was an unexpected but huge event for me and my whole family. We have two children who were ages 10 and 13 at the time and needed care in addition to the around-the-clock care I needed. My husband, with whom I own a medium-sized business, had the flexibility to take some time off to help advocate for my care – but we couldn't afford for him to not work at all for the length of time we needed full-time help. My mother in law had recently retired and was able to move in and care for me and take over caring for our family.

Unfortunately, most Oregonians do not have this luxury. They must choose between their paycheck and caring for loved ones. What if my mother-in-law wasn't retired and healthy herself? Would my husband have had to quit his job? If he had had to shutter his firm, an additional 13 people would have lost their jobs. It would have devastated us and impacted our employees.

I understand that paid family leave feels difficult for businesses, but as a business owner myself with 13 employees, I know that when our employees know that they can care for their families, they are more dedicated to their jobs and more present every day. It is actually a win-win situation. Paid family leave insurance would help small business owners because they can't afford to offer paid family leave on their own. Now we struggle when we do what we know is "right" – enabling our employees to care for their families – and in doing so potentially sacrifice what is prudent – ensuring the financial stability of our firm. Paid family leave insurance would help us, and other smaller business owners to stand on the side of what is right.

I urge you to support paid family and medical leave insurance. This is critical to families in Oregon. Thank you.