

Chair Lively and members of the House Early Childhood and Family Supports Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of paid family leave today.

My name is Kerry McClenahan and I am a small business owner in Portland. My firm, which I founded 24 years ago, provides marketing services to technology companies.

I've taken unpaid maternity leave twice, and ironically the second time was after founding my own company, which did not provide paid leave in the early years. Today, we pay for three weeks of family leave, allow employees to use three weeks of vacation time and, for mom's who give birth, they can tap into short-term disability insurance to cover another six weeks. It's definitely not a perfect solution, but it is the best we can offer, and more than most small businesses do.

Its incredibly difficult for a small professional services company like mine to provide paid leave. When an employee is away, we have to pay contractors or freelancers to do their work in their absence, so essentially we are double-paying during that time.

Seventy-five percent of my employees are women in child-bearing years; not only do I think providing paid leave is the right thing to for my employees, I also think it is an essential business strategy for attracting and retaining talent. And yet, if a few of my staff took leave at the same time, it would be a significant financial burden for my business to bear.

Paid family leave funded by an insurance-type mechanism would be a boon for small businesses and their employees. I urge you to support this bill.