



March 23, 2017

Representative John Lively, Chair
Members of the House Early Childhood and Family Supports Committee
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Lively and Representatives,

Children First for Oregon is the primary research source for child wellbeing data in Oregon. Along with our partners in United for Kids, we work every day to make Oregon the best place to be a kid. We advocate for the structures, policies and programs that can protect the economic security, education, health and safety of all children in Oregon.

The data is stark—Oregon has slipped to 32nd in the country in child well-being. Times have changed; traditional family caregivers must be in the workplace full-time. In 2015, 26% of Oregon mothers with young children worked in low-wage jobs—the second in the nation. There were 103,000 low-income working families. Yet kids get sick, their parents must care for their own aging parents.

Paid Family and Medical Leave would allow parents with young children to take the time necessary to give them a strong start in infancy, care for them when they are sick, or recover from illness or injury themselves without fear of losing employment or worse. While 60% of Oregon workers have unpaid leave, parents often cannot afford to use it. Mothers in low-income families are nearly twice as likely as high-income mothers not to be paid when they stay home with sick children. Three of every four mothers who miss work to care for sick children receive no wages when they are not at work. We have seen how the loss of one paycheck can lead to homelessness for a family.

HB 3087 creates Paid Family and Medical Leave insurance program that pools contributions from both employers and employees to fund the program. Paid leave can increase both workforce retention and the health outcomes of children, making it beneficial for both employers and the parents who work for them.

We urge you to support HB 3087 for the good of children and families and we thank you for your work on behalf of Oregon's kids.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth Cushwa", written in a cursive style.

Elizabeth Cushwa
Strategic Director