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Via Email

House Committee On Early Childhood and Family Supports

Re: Testimony in Support of House Bill 3087

Chair Lively and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 3087, a bill to create a family leave insurance program for Oregonians. I am writing as both a small business owner and as a person who has needed to take family leave as an employee.

I believe HB 3087 would bridge the gap between what is right and what is possible. Every person will need to take time off from work for some reason, to take care of a loved one, for example. Currently large employers are able to provide employees with the ability to take up to twelve weeks off, though it is usually unpaid leave. Small employers often find it more difficult to provide much time off, and it is also usually unpaid leave. It is an economic reality that it doesn't matter how much leave is available, if it is unpaid, it is likely to be under-utilized. This is a reality I faced myself when I could not afford to take all of the leave I was entitled to when my father was undergoing treatment for cancer. HB 3087 would make it possible for Oregon employees to provide the support to their families, instead of relying on governmental institutions to absorb this very real cost of caregiving.

HB 3087 will help all employers to give their employees access to paid leave. This type of benefit would be out of reach for small employers but HB 3087 will level the playing field for small employers. As a business owner, I would love to be able to offer my employees this benefit and am amazed at the modest cost to provide it under HB 3087. I believe that HB 3087 will also be a catalyst for the Oregon Employment Department to create a robust temporary

workforce that will be able to meet business needs while employees are on leave. Since all employers will be covered by HB 3087, temporary coverage for employees will become second nature, and have less impact. As employers, our employees are our most valuable asset. Some employers may worry about making it economically possible for employees to take family and medical leave. However, we need more than just our employees physically at work, we need them mentally there as well. HB 3087 will enable us to take care of our employees so that they when they come back to work they are ready to contribute.

HB 3087 would be an incredible gift to give Oregonians and I strongly urge a yes vote.

Sincerely,
Christina Stephenson