



Dear Chair Lively, Co-chairs Hack and Piluso and members of the committee,

Thank you, for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 3087 - Family and Medical Leave Insurance. My name is Eva RippetEAU, I am a political coordinator with AFSCME Council 75. AFSCME represents over 20,000 workers in the state of Oregon which include state, county, municipal employees, child care providers, and other care givers, and health care workers. This gives us well over 20,000 reasons to support HB 3087.

I say, well over 20,000 because the impact of our members having access to this family and medical leave insurance has a broader impact than each individual member that we represent. The benefits extend to their children, blood relatives, and "an individual whose close association to the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship." I highlight this specific language on those "whose close association to the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship" because this is an area that AFSCME members from all over the state, corrections and care givers, conservative and liberal have raised as important.

About six years ago, one of our member's partner of 23 years going through cancer treatments. Our member needed to be able to take about once a week off to take her loved one to his treatments. Her supervisor wanted to provide the accommodation for medical leave but was unable to do so because the language of our leave laws then and currently do not include unmarried different gender couples. This example reflects the fact that nearly 80% of our nation's families don't fit what we many of us view as the nuclear family. There are many blended families, chosen families, multi-generational families, LGBTQ families that don't all fit into our current definitions in law. The definition provided in HB 3087 would provide much needed time to care for loved ones, no matter the label.

Another reason beyond the over 20,000 members of Oregon AFSCME that the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act is so important are the approximately 45,000 babies born in Oregon every year. According to the Early Learning Division, half of those babies are born on Medicaid. For many, especially our lower-income families, taking any time off is simply not feasible financially or because their employer won't allow time away from work. This is especially hard when our state's rules prohibit licensed child care providers from caring for infants under the age of 6 weeks old, which should not change. This means that within days of a new baby's arrival, parents are cobbling together family and friend care and rushing to get back to work. Providing Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance will help new moms, especially low income moms stay home and bond with their newborns for during this critical first 12 weeks. We should do everything we can do support families to stay home and care for their newborns.

Our coalition partners have and will provide many more reasons HB 3087 is so important, AFSCME urges your support. I welcome any questions.