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Chairman Lively; Honorable Representatives of the Committee,

My name is Alexander Erickson and I would like to testify on behalf of a paid family leave bill for Oregon Workers. Parents give up years of sleep, a small fortune, and a good portion of their patience and sanity in the process of having and raising children as I am sure many of you are well aware. Childbirth can be a harrowing experience, especially for new mothers, and providing time for rest and recovery is vital to the health of the mother and the baby.

Additionally, while there are some valid complaints about the effects on businesses, I believe that the minor impacts this bill would have on business are far outweighed by the economic benefits provided by paid family leave. I implore you to work together to pass this bill to the benefit of our business community as well as the mothers, fathers, and future generations of Oregon.

The economic benefits of paid family leave far outweigh the potential downfalls. Having a baby is expensive and, according to the USDA, a two parent home in the US will spend over twelve thousand dollars in the first year of a baby's life on the various expenses associated with it(USDA). For a family with two parents working one full time job at Oregon's 2022 standard minimum wage, the baby's expenses alone would account for over 20% of their pre-tax income. It is unaffordable for many families to have a kid when they are both earning, let alone, when either parent's income is cut off so they can stay home and take care of their newborn. The expenses are so great that, by taking paid family leave, the mothers are 39% less likely to need government assistance and are far more likely to be back at work nine months to a year after birth according to Rutgers Today citing a study out of Rutgers. These massive economic benefits are contrary to many of the protests against family leave, which include parents not coming back

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to work and high government costs during budgetary a shortfall. The fact that such a large portion of working families are able to be self-sustaining when they are given time with their newborn as opposed to those who have to go back to work should spur bipartisan support. While some may argue that forcing companies to offer paid family leave hurts business, multiple studies, specifically a study on California's new family leave law by the President's Council for Economic Development, concluded that 90% of California businesses affected by the new rules reported either positive or neutral results 10 years after the law was passed(Gillette). Such a high level of positive review from the business community is rare when describing a new regulation. Given the individual, societal, and business related economic benefits, the psychological benefits to the parents and children are a huge additional benefit.

Parents need time to be with their babies after the stressful process of childbirth. While many consider paid leave solely from the perspective of the child's health, both parents have been shown to experience health detriments from decreased time with newborns. The Journal of Mental Health Policy and Economics found that less than 8 weeks of paid and 4 weeks after that unpaid leave leads to an increase in depression and overall health of new mothers(Chatterji). Such negative reactions to a mother being forced to leave her child to support it constitute a problem that we know how to fix but don't have the will to. I am sure many of you, the Honorable Representatives, know how wonderful time with a newborn child is, and must feel sympathy for the mothers and fathers who can't afford to spend time with their new babies. While mothers may be the focus of childbirth, fathers usually take on many responsibilities throughout the child rearing process. According to a study published in American Early

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Childhood Longitudinal Study - Birth Cohort, fathers who take longer leave are more involved with child-care nine months after birth(Nepomnyaschy). It is very important for a kid to have a healthy relationship with both parents in order for it to develop optimally. By the father being more involved in its life as an infant, the father becomes closer to his child which is a substantial benefit to a healthy family dynamic. A more balanced home life can lead to better sleep, higher productivity, and a happier workplace. Both parents see clear benefits in their mental and emotional health from taking paid leave to spend time with their new children.

Children see the greatest benefits from paid family leave. It is clear that a baby needs to have time with its parents, and providing that in a stress free way for the parents to be with their child can greatly increase a baby's health. For example, CNN reported a 10% drop in infant mortality infants whose parents had paid leave(Wallace). The death of a baby is a traumatizing experience that can have lifelong detrimental effects on the mental health of both parents. Such a large decrease in mortality rates should be pursued even if the cost was high, which it is not. The same article reported an increase vaccinations among children whose parents were able to stay at home during the early weeks(Wallace). The increase in vaccination rates is indicative of the parent's ability to stay home and focus their energy on taking care of their newborn rather than having to juggle the boss's needs with the babies. When the baby is given more attention, there is a greater likelihood of its basic needs being met which will lead to a happier and healthier life for the baby overall. Finally, Business Insider reported an increase in breastfeeding in kids whose mothers had paid leave which lead to greater bonding and connections with the mother(Gillette). Breastfeeding directly is a baby's first real bonding experience with the outside world, and moms

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can't breastfeed in most workplaces, especially if the workplace doesn't have a daycare or a space specifically for breastfeeding. A baby's first weeks are vital and it is paramount that its parents are there to take care of their new child.

Oregon should implement paid family leave for all new parents while taking both the business communities needs with the needs of families. Paid family leave is of vital importance to society, business, and especially, our future generations. Children growing up in homes with parents around are much healthier and the health benefits are returned in-kind to the parents. Additionally, when the parents are happier and healthier, they are more productive in their workplace to the point that an overwhelming majority of businesses who have had to implement this policy haven't noted any detriments to their workplace. Providing new families with bonding time is good for babies, their parents, and the economy. Directly in regard to this bill, I would urge the Honorable Representatives on this committee to work together to reach a compromise which can serve to benefit Oregon's business community and Oregon Families. As I know Republicans are against the payroll tax imposed on businesses, and Democrats want to help low-income families to afford paid leave on their salaries, I have a compromise I believe would satisfy both needs. If the payroll tax was paid half by the employer and half by the employee when the employee is earning minimum wage, that would satisfy the Democrats objectives. Then, making the payroll tax progressively higher for the employee as their income increases until they are earning above 250% of the National Poverty Line at which point, the employee would be responsible for the entirety of the tax, a pro-business measure which would satisfy Republicans desire to reduce regulations on businesses. I hope that both sides work together to find a

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compromise and I thank you for taking time to hear my testimony. Please feel free to contact me

at the contacts listed below with any questions.

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