

Ben Verhoeven, President, Peoria Gardens, Inc.
Albany, Oregon
HB 3087 testimony
Thursday, March 23, 2017

Chair Lively and Members of the House Early Education and Family Support Committee:

Hello there. I'm Ben Verhoeven. I'm a second generation farmer, and I run a family owned greenhouse in Albany, Oregon. I'm proud to say my 20 year-round and 40 seasonal employees receive great benefits which, in the big picture, don't cost me much, but mean a lot to everyone, AND they're good for business. My workers are entitled to 12 weeks of full pay parental leave - maternity and paternity, not to mention health care, paid vacation, paid sick leave and a pension.

Many industry groups claim that policies like ours will hurt business.

That's just not true.

Paid parental leave on average costs me less per year than truck repairs, and has a **much** greater effect on the lives of the people I work with, especially their families.

When industry groups say paid family leave will hurt business what they really mean is that it'll hurt their personal profits. I know this because at the end of the day these costs come out of my pocket.

But I pay for it because it's the right thing to do...and (I can't emphasize this enough) it's good for my business.

Parental leave helps me retain key employees, and it has been a fantastic recruiting tool for new hires. I don't have to retrain, and I find and keep the best possible workers.

Let's make the same true for Oregon.

I know offering parental leave, let alone comprehensive family leave, is not easy for all small businesses, which is why an insurance program is the best way forward. It costs businesses like mine less than offering stand-alone plans, and I know that my workers are also contributing. I won't constantly have to balance responsibility to my workers with agony over cost. Instead, I will know that the state program will manage the process, confirm a worker qualifies, and of course **pay** for the leave itself out of the fund. This is a real service, both for me and for my employees.

Oregon **cannot** afford to pass this opportunity up. It's the right thing to do. Support House Bill 3087.