

March 25, 2019

To: The House Business and Labor Committee and the Senate Workforce Committee

From: Celeste Knopf

Re: Support of HB 3031

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Celeste Knopf and I live in Portland, Oregon.

I work in leave administration, and every day I am witness to the desperate need for paid family leave in Oregon, and across the country. My company's employees are fortunate enough to receive short and long term disability insurance, but our disability pay is only 60% of weekly pay, and it does not always cover the duration of their maternity leave, OFLA/FMLA, or disability. It does not support new fathers for baby bonding, or employees caring for family. And it doesn't benefit the Oregonians that are not fortunate enough to have disability insurance through an employer.

Many new parents I know, mothers included, do not take their full FMLA/OFLA leave because they cannot afford to take unpaid leave. Even employees with disability insurance struggle because 60% of their pay does not cover their bills. New fathers rarely take leave, and often only take as much as their PTO allows. I myself have been faced with the difficult decision to use the little PTO I had to care for a parent after major surgery, or to place them in a nursing facility surrounded by strangers and disease.

Many people I know accrued large debts—medical and personal—while on medical leave. Some have even lost their homes. That's crazy. Everyone should be able to give or receive the care they need without going into astronomical debt, burning through their savings, facing bankruptcy or losing their homes. In this moment, you can't control the cost of medical care, but as our representatives you do have the power to provide paid family leave to the Oregonians that desperately need it.

It's long past due for Oregonians (and all Americans, if we are being honest) to be able to care for themselves and their families without risking their financial stability and well-being. It's time for universal paid family and medical leave and I'm asking you to be our voice for change.

Sincerely,

Celeste D. L. Knopf