

March 25, 2019

To: The House Business and Labor Committee and the Senate Workforce Committee  
From: Valerie Silliman  
Re: Support of HB 3031

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Valerie Silliman. I am an Oregonian and live in Clackamas County with my wife and daughter. I am writing in support of HB 3031, the FAML I Equity Act.

I believe that paid family leave will have a long term benefit on the quality of life of all Oregonians while providing immediate support and relief when most needed. Most families in Oregon can't afford an emergency--and the emergency of lost wages due to illness within a family can have a long term impact not just on our financial stability but on our wellness as individuals and families. I am a Palliative Care Social Worker. I have the perspective of witnessing family after family as they support their loved one through end of life transitions and death. These families have to make tough choices about missing work and wages in order to be present to their family and to provide care during acute illnesses or death. The fact is that we all will have times of family crisis, and too often the real crisis is from the economic impact of lost wages. This bill can help families across the socio-economic spectrum have the resources to be present to each other at the beginning and the end of life.

We gave birth to our daughter in 2017. I was able to take 12 weeks off work, with 4 weeks paid (to 65% base salary) by short term disability. I had saved a week of PTO for every year of employment at a local non-profit and used this to pay for an additional 5 weeks of my maternity leave. During the remaining weeks of unpaid leave I had to pay my employer to cover my portion of benefits, at a time when I was missing wages and paying our max out-of-pocket for hospital bills. One can quickly see why for many Oregonians having a child is financially destabilizing. I returned to work with a 12 week old daughter and no paid leave remaining of any kind to take a sick day or a day to care for my daughter, which took a toll on my health and my ability to balance quality of life with work. My wife was only able to take a few weeks off during the early weeks due to financial reasons--despite her wish otherwise, or research showing the benefits of all parents taking leave at the arrival of their child both for the health of the child and the parents. As a woman I know that my long term earning potential is impacted by taking parental leave--and this is compounded in a two-mom family such as ours where the "maternity tax" doubles. We believe that women in Oregon, in all kinds of relationships, will have a more equitable employment trajectory supported by this bill.

Thank you for reading.

Sincerely,

Valerie Silliman, Licensed Clinical Social Worker