

March 25, 2019

To: The House Business and Labor Committee and the Senate Workforce Committee
From: Amy Donohue, Principal, Bora Architects
Re: Support of HB 3031

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Amy Donohue and I live in Portland, OR. Thank you for allowing me to testify here today in support of House Bill 3031 for paid family leave and medical insurance.

I am a Principal at Bora Architects, a firm of 65 people in Portland. In 2015 we made the decision to institute our own Paid Family and Medical Leave Policy, offering six weeks of paid leave at 60% salary for any event covered under the Oregon Family Leave Act. We were spurred to action by the circumstances of one of our employees, a young woman who was going to become a single mother. She was in the untenable position of needing to return to work just two weeks after the birth of her child or trying to finance maternity leave via credit cards. Our leave policy allowed her time to bond with her son and return to work without added financial stress. Since then, more than a dozen employees – both mothers and fathers – have taken leave to care for their newborns. This year, six more Bora babies are on the way – with their parents grateful for the leave. We have had employees needing to travel suddenly for the death of a family member as well as a colleague who had emergency surgery and took necessary time to heal. It should be noted, each and every one of these employees has returned to work - ready to work - which has had a significant impact on the firm's financial health and success as we have been able to retain our investment in their talent, experience and job knowledge.

We understand that there are many businesses, particularly smaller businesses, who would struggle to offer this benefit. This is why a State insurance policy is so critical. Oregonians should not be forced to accept economic hardship or the loss of gainful employment for prioritizing their own well-being or that of a loved one.

From our own experience, we know that when you support employees in their personal lives, you create an environment of trust, loyalty, and dedication between employee and employer that is beneficial for our economy and industry. But beyond the economic case, providing family leave is the humane and responsible thing to do as a society. We must offer adequate support for people as they face what are often some of the most critical moments in their lives, moments in which they may well be vulnerable.

Since implementing our policy in 2015, we have never looked back. Each year, we set aside a small portion of our budget for paid family leave – our best guess as to how many staff members will need to take advantage of the policy that year. A state insurance program would have the added bonus of fixing a business cost for us, while extending a necessary benefit for our employees. Our financial analysis of the

proposed payroll tax indicates the cost would be achievable for the firm and for our employees. By sharing the costs, everyone benefits.

Bora will continue to offer Paid Family and Medical Leave and we will encourage our colleagues across the profession to follow suit. But *everyone* needs and deserves to have access to Paid Family Leave. It is time for Oregon to acknowledge the moral and economic imperative to do so and join the six other States in the US who have taken action to implement a policy.

Sincerely,

Amy Donohue, AIA
Principal, Bora Architects