

March 25, 2019

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

Dear Chairs and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kristin Almy and I live in Portland.

Six years ago, my mother retired after teaching elementary school for more than thirty years. She also found out that she had stage three breast cancer. From juggling appointments with her oncologist, chemotherapy sessions, and the down days that directly followed, she approached this disease with all the spit, fire, and tenacity in which she has done everything else in her life. I traveled to my hometown to help care for my mother for a month, and had quit my job prior to doing so, knowing my employer would not be supportive of this decision to emotionally support my parents, alleviate the stress on my father to take her to and from all the doctors, and to dry my mother's tears after I shaved her remaining hair. After a double mastectomy and months of treatment, she is now a healthy grandmother of six grandchildren who realizes how fortunate she was to be able to receive the care that she needed. We have joked that it was "lucky that she had been retired", because how could she have managed this as a full time school teacher, much less if she still had children that also needed her care?

I am now a small business owner here in Oregon, I understand how important it is to value my employees and be able to give them the paid time that they need to welcome a new child or to care for themselves or loved ones, as this is something that I wish that I could have been afforded. But this puts my husband and I's small design studio in fiscal jeopardy, as we pay for both their salary while replacing them in their absence, forcing the choice of either growing as a company and employing more folks or paying for the time we think is necessary. We have made the choice to provide paid leave to our employees, but at the cost of our potential growth. Why do I need to make the decision to allow someone else the ability to dry their loved ones tears or to thrive as a business? This should not be a one or the other situation. Paid family medical leave allows for us to both provide the time off that all folks in the workforce will need at some stage of their life, while not shouldering the entire burden on the business itself and to make this choice. All Oregonians and Oregon small businesses deserve to both thrive and grow, and passing House Bill 3031 is a way that we can make that happen.

Sincerely,

Kristin