



March 25, 2019

Chair Barker, Vice-Chairs Barreto and Bynum and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) of OR, we respectfully request your support for House Bill 3031.

At the outset, we wish to give a great deal of credit to all the people who have devoted their time in drafting this legislation. It has taken time, energy and likely some patience and fortitude. Individuals from employee and business-oriented groups, as well as legislators have come together to present an effective, well balanced legislative proposal that will help the Oregonian community to move with more confidence into the future.

Although we are surely not the only group to take notice of this fact, it is of critical importance that -- unlike the majority of developed countries worldwide, the United States does not guarantee paid time off for medical and family care. Without these policies, balancing the responsibilities of work and family is difficult for employees, negatively impacting productivity, making recovery from major illnesses or injuries difficult, and in some cases inhibiting the healthy development of children.

Benefits provided under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act and the Oregon Family Leave Act are simply not sufficient for families who have to do without time off for serious personal or family emergencies. In addition, for the citizens of Oregon, a decision to stay home to care for a sick child or family member could jeopardize their job or family income.

HB 3031 allows both parents and children to have adequate time for recovery after childbirth, including breastfeeding, bonding, and immunizations for the infant. One can cite numerous studies that demonstrate the critical importance of this care. For example, parental leave has been shown to decrease maternal depression and infant-mortality rates. An international study of paid family leave concluded that each additional month of leave was associated with a decrease of up to 13 percent in infant mortality. Paid family leave results in mothers' breastfeeding at higher rates and for longer periods, reducing the rate of childhood infections, and it also increases the odds that developmental delays will be detected earlier, when interventions will be most effective.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Grinfas, Buchanon Angeli Altschul & Sullivan, *Paid Parental Leave Continues to Gain Traction*, Oregon Civil Rights Newsletter, Dec 2016.

Businesses also benefit from paid family and medical leave. Workers who have access to paid leave after a child's birth tend to remain in the workforce, have higher wages over time, and rely less on public assistance and food stamp benefits. As a result, they contribute more to their own economic security and to the security of the economy as a whole. Employers also benefit when workers have access to paid leave; greater labor force attachment among those with paid leave reduces recruiting, hiring, and training costs. Importantly, employers who coordinated their own benefits with a state program likely realized cost savings from the program when employees used paid family leave either instead of or in combination with employer-provided benefits, such as paid sick leave, temporary disability, designated paid family leave, or vacation.<sup>2</sup>

Statistics do not tell the full story of the emotional toll that is exacted by employees' having to choose between caring for a family member and going to work. Life's transitions are not always easy and it is up to the wider community to take responsibility to provide some level of support to those experiencing them.

HB 3031 will make a genuinely positive difference in the lives of the citizens and businesses in Oregon. The paid medical and family leave program established in HB 3031 is practical, takes in account the interests of various sectors of our economy and is the compassionate thing to do.

Respectfully,

Trish Garner

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<sup>2</sup> Linda Houser and Thomas Vartanian, *Policy Matters: Public Policy, Paid Leave for New Parents, and Economic Security for U.S. Workers*, Center for Women and Work: Rutgers, April 2012.