

March 25, 2019

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

When I started working in architecture out of grad school, I was amazed to find how few women stuck around in the field. I became a champion for conversations about retaining women and attracting people of diverse backgrounds. I quickly realized that without the work-life balance afforded through appropriate medical/family leave, we will never evolve to be an industry that is representative of the vastly diverse people and needs that exist. As the people responsible for designing an equitable built environment, this is simply not sustainable. When I developed chronic pain at 27, and needed to take a month off work to reset my health at 28, I discovered that my firm didn't have short-term disability and went unpaid for several weeks after using all of my already dwindling sick and vacation time. I needed that break desperately, but I probably went back to work sooner than I should have. And I couldn't help thinking - If I had been responsible for a mortgage, or supporting independents, I would have been out of luck. This type of hiccup in income stream can be truly dire in our economic setting where many millennials are paying off massive student debt while trying to get ahead in their adult lives. We absolutely need a way for people to have the safety net to take care of themselves when they need to, or it can create a downward financial and personal trajectory where, on top of stressful health issues, an individual needs to limp along to stay ahead of bills and show up to work when working is the last thing a physician would recommend. I am of service to my industry but I can't bring my skills to the table if I can't stay healthy or can't stay in my line of work. All of us have so much to contribute and our health status does not change that. People are our most important asset as businesses and as a society that wants to move beyond a status quo that simply isn't working for many of us. We need avenues to support our diverse health and life needs, and the FAMLI Equity Act is one of them. Please help us put people first.

Hannah Silver