



March 25, 2019

To: The House Business and Labor Committee and the Senate Workforce Committee
From: Yee Won Chong, Board of Directors, Forward Together
Re: Support of HB 3031

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Yee Won Chong and I'm here tonight with Forward Together and the Time to Care coalition to express my support of HB 3031.

I respectfully ask you to pass House Bill 3031, the FAMILI Equity Act, and include the broad definition of "family member" as it is in the bill. The nuclear family definition used in OFLA leaves my family behind. I was born and raised in Malaysia, and immigrated to the U.S. so that I could safely express my sexual orientation, gender identity and political beliefs. With my blood family 8,000 miles away, I have created a strong chosen family in Portland, Oregon. My chosen family celebrated with me when I became a US citizen 6 years ago, and took care of me when I was recovering from my gender transition surgeries. They are named in my living will and my healthcare directives. When I was diagnosed with Stage II cancer in April of 2016, I underwent chemotherapy treatments for five months, daily radiation every day for six weeks, and 2 surgeries. Now, thankfully, I am cancer free, but I continue to be in recovery from the many side effects from my treatments. It was challenging for me to go through cancer treatments and maintain an income.

I am self-employed, so if I don't work I do not get paid. HB 3031 gives self-employed people an option to participate in the program. I cut back on work completely when I had surgeries. I am now working full-time, but for months the side effects of chemotherapy and radiation made it hard for me to work. It took four hours to complete a task that usually took an hour. If I had access to paid family and medical leave insurance, it would have alleviated the financial burden and allowed me to focus on my recovery. During my treatment, my Portland chosen family cared for me physically and emotionally. They took time off to stay with me in the hospital, and to care for me while I recovered. They helped me sort through medical information, and were my advocates when hospital staff repeatedly misunderstood my gender identity and referred to me by the wrong



gender pronouns. Having them by my side helped me navigate the overwhelming emotional burden of fighting cancer. During the 2015 legislative session, before my cancer diagnosis, I told you my story as part of the effort to include an expansive family definition in Oregon’s paid sick time law. Unfortunately, Oregon lawmakers decided not to include a family definition that reflects my family in that law. Now, we have another chance. I urge you to pass paid family and medical leave in Oregon and define “family member” to include:

- An individual for whom an employee is responsible for providing health care, assistance in accessing or managing medical treatment or support with the activities of daily living;
- An individual who lives with an employee and with whom the employee shares responsibility for each other’s common welfare; or
- Any other individual whose close association with an employee is equivalent to a family relationship as evidenced by a nexus of factors including, but not limited to:
 - A shared responsibility for financial obligations;
 - Signs of intent to marry;
 - A child or children in common;
 - The length of the personal relationship between the individual and the employee;
 - or
 - Common ownership of real or personal property.

This definition directly identifies the different formations we see in families today, which ensures that families like mine are not left behind. Please support this definition of family and the FAMILI Equity Act by voting yes on House Bill 3031.

Thank you so much for your time, your good work and for hearing this bill.

Yee Won Chong
Member of the Board of Directors,
Forward Together