



March 25, 2019

To: The House Business and Labor Committee and the Senate Workforce Committee

Re: Support of HB 3031

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ellie Goldman. I am a Portland resident, and I'm here tonight with Forward Together and the Time to Care coalition to express my support of HB 3031.

I urge you to pass House Bill 3031, the FAMLJ Equity Act, including the broad definition of "family member" as it is defined in the bill. More limited nuclear family definitions, as in OFLA, do not understand my family and how we support each other.

I am incredibly lucky—when I came out of the closet to my parents and siblings, who the state understands as my family, I was accepted lovingly. But this experience is not shared by all my queer siblings, which is why we talk so urgently about "chosen family". I offer you the example that is weighing most heavily on my heart right now, of a trans brother. After he came out, the family that raised him cut off contact. He is Jewish, like me, and he loves to play guitar, and he is dying. Through his extended illness, it has been chosen family who have driven him to treatment, who have made sure he has access to food he can eat, and who have reminded him through every difficult step that he is cherished and loved. When he passes away, which is expected to be in the next couple of weeks, it will be his chosen family who sit shiva—the week-long Jewish mourning ritual conducted in the home that begins a year of ritual mourning.

His family—chosen family—have made significant changes to their lives to care for him. Some were able to take time off work when needed without a second thought. Some have had to balance the time they have spent caring for him in his final days with the basic need to maintain a steady paycheck, a situation that tears at the soul.

I sincerely ask you to pass House Bill 3031, including the broad definition of family, so that other people in this situation are not faced with the heart-wrenching knowledge that caring for their kin means that paying rent will be especially challenging this month. Mostly, we do not need outside validation of our family. We know who we are. But this is one of the times when it matters.

Thank you for your attention and for your support of House Bill 3031, from my family to yours.

Sincerely,

Ellie Goldman

Forward Together Volunteer