



# Oregon State University

College of Public Health and  
Human Sciences  
School of Social and Behavioral  
Health Sciences  
Oregon State University  
410 Waldo Hall  
Corvallis, Oregon 97331

P 541-737-7243  
e Kelly.Chandler@oregonstate.edu  
health.oregonstate.edu

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Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kelly Chandler, and I am an Assistant Professor in the College of Public Health and Human Sciences at Oregon State University. For over 15 years, I have studied the experiences of working parents, with the goal of finding ways to improve work to benefit employees and their families. Specifically, my research focuses on workplaces policies, practices, and work conditions that affect employees' health and well-being, family processes, and in turn family members' health and well-being. (Note that previously I published under the name Davis.) I am submitting this written testimony based upon my expertise as a working mother of two daughters and as a researcher. My testimony does not reflect a position taken by Oregon State University.

I am writing to ask that you vote in favor of the FAMIL Equity Act (HB3031), which will provide universal paid family and medical leave to Oregonians. Despite the increasing number of women in the workforce, role of fathers in childcare responsibilities, and elder care needs, the U.S. is *still* the only high-income country that does not mandate paid leave for new parents (Pew Research Center, 2016). My statement ten years ago still holds true: Available work-life policies are severely limited and mismatched with employees' needs (Davis & Stamps Mitchell, 2009). If we want families and this nation to prosper, basic necessary supports must be in place as parents are bonding with and caring for the next generation of workers. Below I delineate three reasons why I support this legislation.

1. **Unpaid leave is not a viable option for many families.** Hard-working families living paycheck to paycheck must make difficult decisions with the arrival of their new child. Instead of being able to spend critical time bonding with their newborns, new parents must prioritize earning enough money to maintain a roof overhead (which is becoming increasingly more difficult here in Oregon), providing food on the table, and coping with rising health care costs. Policies should provide for the ability to perform roles in both spheres effectively; this benefits multiple stakeholders.
2. **Paid leave benefits children, parents, and organizations.** Empirical research documents numerous benefits of leave—particularly paid leave. Paid leave is associated with reduced infant mortality, low birth weight, and fewer hospitalizations (e.g., Jou et al., 2018). Paid leave also has maternal health benefits, including lower risk of psychological distress, depression, and physical health issues (e.g., Aitken et al., 2015), as well as positive impact on their ability to care for a new child (Appelbaum & Milkman, 2011). Fathers are more likely to take leave when paid leave is available (Bartel et al., 2018), and increased fathers' involvement has numerous benefits for children and their partners who are striving for parity in the workplace and at home. Businesses benefit as well. For example, paid leave laws in California and New Jersey are associated with an increase in women's labor force attachment (e.g., Byker, 2016), especially among workers with low quality jobs (Appelbaum & Milkie, 2011). Thus, paid leave is a win-win situation for families and employers.
3. **Access to paid leave should be equitable.** Access to policies that support employees with child, partner, and elder care demands is inequitable. Those who could benefit the most from access to

work-life policies, such as low-income, hourly workers with limited resources, typically do not have access. To combat this inequity, access to paid leave should be a right and not a privilege or due to "luck of the draw." Paid leave should be for all Oregonians.

In sum, work and family roles are the two most salient roles occupied by adults. Performance in each role affects the next generation of workers and our nation's future. Paid leave is not just a "mother's issue" or a "family's issue;" it is our state's and our nation's issue. By instituting a paid leave law, Oregon will be a leading role model among the few other states in the U.S. like California and New Jersey, setting the precedent for supporting U.S. working families. Thank you for considering my testimony in support of HB3031.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly D. Chandler". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Kelly D. Chandler, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Human Development & Family Sciences