

March 25, 2019

To: The House Business and Labor Committee and the Senate Workforce Committee
From: Douglas Weathers, President, Sodbuster Farms
Re: Opposition to HB 3031

Dear Chairs and Members of the Committee,

I own and operate a small business in Oregon, and I am concerned about the potential impacts of the medical leave insurance program currently being considered by the state legislature. Please consider how this proposal may effect small businesses like mine before voting in favor of HB 3031.

Worker welfare is important—to our community, to our business—but mandated programs like the bill under consideration cannot possibly account for all different kinds of employment and employer situations. It would be better for companies to be incentivized to support their employees, rather than adding an additional tax burden on everyone. These sorts of taxes make it harder to offer quality work to Oregonians, not better jobs.

It is also not the right time for this sort of legislation. Recently passed increased minimum wages and paid sick leave have given employees greater security, but we should let those programs mature before creating additional tax burdens (to both the employee and the employer). This program also doubles up on coverage provided by Oregon's paid sick time, which would be incredibly burdensome on employers left with no employee for a job that must be held open for their return.

Oregon's small employers would be faced with impossible situations when one or more employees access the benefit, forcing them to hold jobs open for extended periods of time, hire unqualified temporary workers, or overextend their remaining workforce. Again, incentivizing companies to build long-term relationships with their employees—rather than mandating up to 32 weeks of leave per year—is key.

Additional reporting and paperwork will be a significant burden to small businesses, as will the need to continue paying for non-working employee's healthcare coverage. We care about our employees, but mandated programs like this overshoot and miss the mark.

As you consider how you will vote on these bills, please take into account the many potential consequences for small businesses like mine. I'll be looking forward to seeing that your work in the legislature ensures that Oregon's small businesses are able to thrive and provide great jobs without undue hardships imposed on them by the government.

Please vote NO on state-mandated, employer-funded paid family & medical leave HB 3031.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Douglas Weathers
President of Sodbuster Farms