

Dear House Business and Labor Committee members and other voting parties,

I wish to begin my testimony by offering my heartfelt gratitude to all those involved with the creation of, and support for, HB 3031. Paid family leave is legislation Oregon residents deserve, and frankly it is long overdue.

My husband has the good fortune to work for a company that provides paid family leave at 66% of an employee's earnings for up to 12 weeks in a calendar year for a qualifying event.

In January of 2018, my family and I experienced such an event when we welcomed a new baby. As a result of paid family leave, my husband was able to be home with our newborn, myself, and our two older children for the first eight weeks of our daughter's life. He was then able to split up the four remaining weeks of paid leave to be used in July and December.

For many families the work of caring for an infant falls overwhelmingly upon the shoulders of the mother. She provides care for baby while her partner is away at work, and she manages mostly on her own at night as well, since her partner will need to be rested for work the following day. Because my husband didn't have to work those first two months we were able to share the load during the day, as well as take turns providing night time care for our infant. We were able to rest in the security of teamwork; care for each other; support one another; and bond with our baby as nature intended.

The time provided by paid leave allowed us to sustain stability in our home during what can be one of the most beautifully disruptive times in the life of a family. Every member of our family benefitted from having the support we needed to find our way to a new normal.

Our experience shouldn't be unique, but it is. Many Oregon mothers are forced to return to work even before their bodies have healed from child birth, because they cannot afford to miss a paycheck. Many more Oregon fathers get only a handful of days to be with mother and child before returning to work for the same reason. The same is true for families who adopt their children.

Paid family leave shouldn't be a privilege; it should be the right of every Oregonian. I urge you to vote in favor of HB 3031 and give every resident of our great state the opportunity to attend to their family's needs without fear of financial ruin.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Cassie and Zach Steele