

I am an individual who deeply values holistic health, mothering and nurturance. Not having Paid Family Medical Leave had a negative impact on my family's health and my ability to fully nurture my son.

~~During my pregnancy, I was employed by a company that did health screenings and genetic testing. In my preparation for my son's arrival, I discovered that I wasn't protected by Oregon FLMA (I was at the company for 2.5 years, but they had under 25 employees).~~ *FMLA* *my company*

Sept. 7th was my due date. I submitted a maternity leave proposal to my employer on June 14th and was told about a month later that they wouldn't be able to offer me any paid maternity leave. I was a single income mom, and this news disturbed me so much that it caused an abnormal increase of fetal movement that made me think I was going to go into labor 2 months early.

In August, my job was terminated. I lost my health insurance. I started a GoFundMe campaign for my maternity leave expenses. ~~If you search "Maternity Leave" on GoFundMe today, you'll find over 3500 women trying to fundraise money.~~

and
~~At the time, I was living in an apartment in The Pearl District. I had a beautiful home birth; however, it was made more difficult knowing I didn't have any paid leave. Had to overcome great fear, open my body despite, and trust somehow we'd be supported:~~

Instead of focusing on healing and how to care for my newborn, I had the added stress of trying to secure insurance, food and resources for my postpartum recovery period, and finding a new job. ~~There were days and weeks of phone calls (sometimes experiencing 2-hour wait times).~~ It didn't help that I was anemic. My iron level was 18. ~~You start feeling tired when it hits 30, and the optimal range is around 80-90.~~

3 month's postpartum my son's father almost died, and we spent a night in the ER. I was also no longer able to afford my apartment, so I gave up my autonomy and moved in with my parents. My son developed colic. I averaged 2-3 hours of sleep in a 24 hour period for 15 months. My back went out. I had lactation issues due to all the stress.

7 months postpartum, I was down to my very last dollar when unemployment finally kicked in (my employer misclassified me as an independent contractor when I was functioning as an employee). It took an additional 1.5 years of self-advocating to be reimbursed the tax money that they should've paid on my behalf as an employee.

Having paid family medical leave during my baby's first three months would have greatly lessened my stress during pregnancy, labor, and postpartum. Instead of being thrust into survival mode, it would've allowed me to adequately rest and heal and enjoy the preciousness of my son. I urge you to pass paid family medical leave so no family has to go through the added stress of finances during these critical and sacred first few months. It is vital to our collective physical, mental, emotional and economic health.