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VIA EMAIL: (hbl.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)

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

From: Kimberly Pray

Re: Support of HB 3031

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kimberly Pray and I live in Portland, Oregon, where I founded Catalyst Law, LLC four years ago with my law partner, Kate Kilberg. We are writing today to ask that your committee and the Oregon Legislature does everything it can to pass the FAMILI Equity Act (HB3031) in 2019.

Catalyst Law, LLC (“Catalyst”) is a women-owned B-Corporation law firm and recipient of the Portland Business Journal award for “most diverse small/medium law firm” for the last two years. Just this year, we adopted a short-term disability insurance coverage, which could provide employees with a maximum of six or eight weeks partial paid leave. However, while we recently added six employees to our team, we do not yet have the financial resources to offer additional paid family leave to our employees.

Recently, one of our employees juggled the heartbreaking choice of spending time with her mother, who was on hospice, and keeping up her work responsibilities. The benefits offered by HB3031 could offer employees the paid time they need to care for a terminally-ill parent without a need to calculate how to do so without a paycheck.

In 2012, I worked for a small consulting firm that, similar to Catalyst, was not required to offer unpaid family leave and could not afford to offer paid leave to its employees. My husband and I had no savings - we'd borrowed from friends and family to fund IVF after five years of trying to start a family. When I was finally pregnant, I faced an impossible choice in my second trimester – either stay at home on bed rest or possibly lose the baby we'd given everything to

bring into the world. We were fortunate that I had flexibility to work from home, but I often thought of others who

Our complication resolved and I later delivered a healthy baby girl. However, in the process, I suffered a traumatic birth and surgery. Out of financial necessity, just to pay the bills, I went back to work after only six-weeks unpaid leave. As a result of the financial pressures on my family, I had difficulty bonding with my baby, experienced post-partum depression, and sought treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The week I returned to work, I learned my employer was closing his firm in a few short months, which added to the stress on our family as I tripled down for a job search and freelance opportunities.

Under the same circumstances, the paid family leave covered by HB 3031 would have allowed me some relief from the financial stress that drove me to return to work too early. I could have spent necessary time to seek mental health treatment, continue to breastfeed and bond with my daughter, and build up additional resilience for the ongoing stress of motherhood and full-time work.

In 2015, I delivered a healthy baby boy only seven months after launching Catalyst. If I didn't work, I did not get paid. Again, because I was self-employed, I could not afford to take time off and returned to work after only six-weeks recovery and bonding time with my son. The paid family leave covered by HB 3031 would have eased the financial burden on our family.

While my husband, a state employee, stayed with the babies for four additional weeks after I returned to work, his leave was also unpaid (yet covered by the FMLA), which further burdened our already precarious financial situation. To finance our own leave, we borrowed from my retirement plan, accumulated interest on deferred student loans, and borrowed extensively from family members.

I can only imagine if my daughter had been born premature, at 29 or 32 weeks as predicted by our doctors. My niece was recently born at 29-weeks, requiring three months in the NICU and significant leave for both parents. We would have lost our house and gone bankrupt under those circumstances.

All Oregonians should be able to give or get the care they need without giving up their paychecks or their jobs. I realize that despite our struggles, our family is privileged to have the resources we had to support us through bringing children into the world without paid time off. Whether it's after the birth of a child, to deal with a child or partner's serious illness or medical condition, or needing to tend to an aging parent, family and medical issues can happen to all of us. Oregonians must not be forced to choose between family and a paycheck, not to mention losing a job because of a choice to prioritize caring for family. Yet, it is a heartbreaking decision that too many people are forced to make.\

It's long past time for Oregonians to be able to care for their families without risking their financial stability. It's time for universal paid family and medical leave in Oregon.

Yours Sincerely,



Kimberly Pray