



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Chair Taylor, Vice Chair Knopp, members of the committee,

My name is Karin Power and I am honored to represent House District 41.

As the youngest mother in the legislature, I am pleased to bring you House Bill 2341-A today, which passed out of House Committee on Business and Labor and off the House Floor unanimously.

When looking at my employee handbook at work, I realized that there are some gaps between federal and state law, particularly in regard to pregnancy accommodations. The reality is, that despite the passage of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act forty years ago, pregnant women in Oregon continue to experience discrimination as a result of pregnancy. In October 2018, investigative reporting from the New York Times highlighted the devastating physical, mental, and economic impacts of pregnancy discrimination in the United States.ⁱ One recent survey estimated that each year, a quarter of a million pregnant women are denied requests for workplace accommodations because of narrow interpretations of federal law.ⁱⁱ Consequently, women are having to make an unacceptable choice: whether to protect the health of her pregnancy or her financial security.

Together with colleagues and stakeholders, we have worked to create a bill that fits the needs of employees, employers, and BOLI. The amendment conforms this new pregnancy accommodations process and the resulting enforcement to essentially mirror the same process that already exists for disability accommodations in state statute. Moreover, the amendment extends protections for pregnant workers to employers who have 6 or more employees-also the same as what currently applies for disability accommodations. These efforts to use similar language and processes should help employers understand and implement this legislation.

Twenty-three states and the District of Columbia have already stepped up and passed laws with bipartisan support to explicitly grant pregnant employees the right to reasonable accommodations at work. Colleagues, we have the opportunity to pass HB 2341-A to combat pregnancy discrimination, to ensure full and equal participation of women in the workforce, and to promote public health. Today, we can strengthen and affirm protections for pregnant employees.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,

State Representative Karin Power

ⁱ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/10/21/business/pregnancy-discrimination-miscarriages.html>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/workplace/pregnancy-discrimination/listening-to-mothers-experiences-of-expecting-and-new-mothers.pdf>

