



To: Senate Workforce and House Business and Labor

From: Amber Halbert Childress, Co-Owner, High Ridge Roofing and Construction

Date: March 25, 2019

Re: Letter in Support of HB 3031

Chairs Senator Taylor and Representative Baker, Vice-Chairs Senator Knopp, Representative Barreto and Representative Bynum, and Members of the Committees,

My name is Amber Halbert Childress, co-owner of High Ridge Roofing and Construction and a member of Main Street Alliance of Oregon. In a few short weeks, I'll give birth to my third child. The concerns that come along with having a child at a more mature age pale in comparison to the stress that accompanied the pregnancy and birth of my first two children. Back then, I was waiting tables and bartending. I was on my feet all the time, and my growing belly took a toll on my body and overall health. To make matters worse, I did not have access to the leave I needed to heal and learn to be a mom after my babies arrived. I had to be back at work and on my feet long before I should have been and suffered both physical and emotional complications unnecessarily had I the time needed to recover.

This time around, I am the co-owner of a small construction and roofing business in Springfield. I'm in a position that affords me the flexibility to heal and bond with my baby, but this support and flexibility shouldn't be a luxury. I needed this support when I was a server, perhaps even more than I do today.

The Family Equity Act, HB3031, would create a statewide paid family and medical leave insurance program. This is the kind of program that reaches across socioeconomic lines to benefit all Oregonians - women and men.

I employ 7 people both men and women, and they too should have support to take time away from work when welcoming a new child, recovering from a serious illness, or caring for a loved one. Our society has changed. Women have taken on more and more responsibility - many becoming primary or secondary breadwinners for their families, but the shift has not included a balancing out of caregiving responsibility. The Family Equity Act is a policy solution that normalizes this social transformation. Men and women alike should be supported to care for their family members when it's needed and necessary. Fathers who take parental leave are more involved in their child's direct care as they continue to grow and develop.

I'm here today because I can't make paid family and medical leave policy a reality for my employees on my own. Like many small business owners, without the support of a statewide program like that proposed in HB3031, I am unable to provide this benefit to my team. It's time for Oregon to support its small business economy by passing the Family Equity Act.

Thank you for your time, and support for the Family Equity Act.