

March 18, 2019

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to urge you to pass the Family Equity Act, **HB 3031**. Caring for a newborn or newly adopted child, or for an ill family member, should not be a luxury only the wealthy can afford.

As a retired educator and social worker, I have traveled, lived, and volunteered in many countries in Europe and Latin America over the past fifteen years. Through communicating with acquaintances I meet in these diverse places, I am often amazed and embarrassed to discover how little support the USA offers to its care-giving citizens, compared to the assistance offered in many other civilized nations.

In my former position as the Manager of the Oregon Special Needs Adoption Coalition, I witnessed many situations in which families interested in adopting an older child or sibling group changed their minds when they realized they could not afford to take off the extended time needed to help a formerly abused or neglected foster child adjust. Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, nurturing family, yet many “age out” of foster care with no place to call home. The outcomes for these youth are dire. They have significantly higher rates of homelessness, early pregnancy, addictions, and mental health challenges than other young adults

Oregon has often been lauded as a leader in adoption and child welfare. It is time to reclaim that reputation and to show leadership by passing a paid family and medical leave policy.

Respectfully yours,

Claudia Hutchison

2133 SE 52 Ave

Portland Or 97215