

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS AND LABOR

By Erika Palafox

Chair Barker, Taylor and members of the committee,

For the record my name is Erika Palafox and I am a member of the Latinx community in Woodburn. Today, I join my community organization PCUN to express my full support for HB 3031: The FAMLI Equity Act. This bill is extremely important to me. At one point in our lives, we will have to take care of selves or loved ones and this should not come at the expense of losing a job. And in our Latinx community, family is an important value, families are central to our lives.

I am a mother of four children. My oldest son is 15 years old, my second daughter is 13, my third daughter is 6 and my most recent baby is only four months. I have worked in nurseries in Marion county for more than 16 years.

Working in this sector has often times been difficult. Although I work hard, it's not always paid well. I come from a low wage working family, and work hard every day to provide a good quality education and life for my children.

I am invested in the FAMLI Equity Act for many reasons. When I first became pregnant, my first child was born premature. My situation became more difficult when my second baby was also born premature. My girl was born at 7 months. At that time, I was working in a nursery and when she was born, I was only able to take care of her for five weeks. I did not have another alternative than to leave my daughter with a babysitter. As a mother, I felt devastated to leave my premature baby in order to go back to work. At that time, I was also going through domestic violence and I was the breadwinner of the home.

Four months ago, I gave birth to a beautiful baby. This time I was working in seed company. At this seed company, I had access to 12 unpaid weeks off to be with my baby. I am thankful for having those 12 weeks. However, it is important to recognize these 12 weeks were not paid and even though the father of my baby worked hard to pay bills and rent, I know that not all families in our community can do the same. Our farmworkers and families in Oregon deserve to be able to care for their loved ones without fear of retaliation or losing one's job.

Today, as a mother, a worker, and a member of our community, I ask for your support for HB 3031: The FAMLI Equity Act.

Sincerely,
Erika Palafox