

March 25, 2019

To: The House Business and Labor Committee and the Senate Workforce Committee  
From: Hannah Harrod  
Re: Support of HB 3031

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Hannah Harrod and I'm here tonight Representing the Rural Organizing Project Oregon and I currently live in Corvallis and I grew up in Drain and I am here in support of the House Bill 3031, the FAMLI Equity Act. I am here to represent the Rural Organizing Project in support of the House Bill 3031, the FAMLI Equity Act. The Rural Organizing Project is a non-profit organization supporting a network of over sixty groups in rural counties and the small towns of Oregon in 31 of Oregon's 36 counties. Our members work in many different types of occupations and workplaces throughout Oregon. Some are lucky enough to have jobs that provide paid sick leave, parental leave or Family Medical Leave to care for sick family members. Some have paid leave for one of those categories when it is necessary to take time away from work – most often a few days of personal sick leave. But many have no paid leave at all. The consequences of that lack of a paycheck can range from inconvenience to devastating – from missing a few days of pay to losing a job and consequently losing a home, or health insurance, or a car or financial stability. We are here to advocate that Oregon become the seventh state in the United States to create a mechanism to fund paid , leave for workers who experience illness, who are caring for a sick family member, or welcoming a new baby or adopted child into their family.

At least 145 countries ensure access to paid sick days for short- or long-term illnesses, with 127 providing a week or more annually. The United States is one of the very few countries in the world that has no national law mandating paid leave for sickness, parental leave, or caring for sick family members. These benefits are left totally up to the employer or to negotiated benefits if the workers are lucky enough to have union representation. And this problem hits workers in low wage industries like food services and hotel work the hardest. While overall, thirty-nine percent of workers in the private sector do not have paid sick leave, seventy-nine percent of workers in those service industries lack paid sick leave – industries dominated by women and heavily made up of women of color. And the burden of family care also falls most heavily on women as well.

Our neighboring states of California and Washington have already passed and implemented paid Family Medical Leave. We believe the bill that is before you is a sound one and that the group that has worked to craft it has done their best to overcome some of the shortcomings of the bills passed in those states. We like that the benefit plan is set up in a way to replace a higher percentage of earnings for low-wage workers insuring that they can take the leave they are helping to fund when they need it. We also support the proposal that requires the employers to match the contributions of employees into the fund, since the greatest number of workers who will draw on this fund are likely to be those taking sick leave for themselves.

Finding reliable childcare and eldercare is even more difficult in rural areas and small towns than it is in urban areas and this puts even more stress on women workers in our constituency who are often either the sole breadwinners in a family unit or are providing a very necessary paycheck to the ability of a family to stay afloat and educate their children. They are put in a position of providing the care and losing their paycheck and risking their job as well, or leaving a child or family member without adequate care. We feel that by passing this bill and implementing a program to provide a system of paid family medical leave, you will help

eliminate the need for a worker to have to make that impossible and unnecessary choice. Thank you.

Hannah Harrod

Rural Organizing Project