

March 25, 2019

To: The House Business and Labor Committee and the Senate Workforce Committee

From: Helen Bellanca, MD, MPH

Re: Support of HB 3031

Dear Chairs and Members of the Committee,

My name is Helen Bellanca and I live in SE Portland.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective on paid family and medical leave. I am a family physician, and have worked in community health clinics serving low-income families in Oregon for the past 18 years.

Low-wage workers often struggle to find both employment and child care that meets their needs, and they must constantly battle to hold the basic logistics of their family lives together. I remember one of my patients, a low-income woman who was pregnant and clearly needed a C-section because of a pregnancy complication. However, she asked our team not to do the C-section. Her plan had been to deliver her baby and be back at her job within a week, and she was afraid that if we did surgery she wouldn't be able to return to work so quickly and she would lose her job. Not doing the C-section seriously jeopardized her health and her baby's health, but proceeding with it would seriously jeopardize her financial status and her housing, which would have an even bigger impact on the health and safety of both mother and baby.

I can't imagine being in her shoes and making that choice. No one in our community should have to make that choice.

For this woman and her baby, paid family leave would have made a huge difference to her health, her baby's health, and to their long-term economic security. This is an equity issue. High-income earners do not deal with these concerns nearly as often as low-income workers do. We need paid family and medical leave that covers all workers in our state.

Sincerely,

Helen K. Bellanca, MD, MPH