



### **Testimony in support of House Bill 3031**

Melissa Busch RN, BSN, CRRN

Oregon Nurses Association

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Chair Barker, Senator Taylor and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of House Bill 3031, the FAMLII Equity Act. My name is Melissa Busch and I'm a Nurse and a mother. I work in Home Health in my community of Columbia County - visiting patients and their families in their homes to help them manage chronic illnesses, navigate life with disabilities, recover from surgeries, cope with terminal diagnoses, and in many other capacities. I care for patients and their families who are often experiencing the most vulnerable times of their lives. In my 10 years of experience as a Nurse, I have come to realize the incredible need for a robust Paid Family and Medical Leave program in Oregon.

I have too often seen Oregonians have to choose between getting a paycheck or caring for a family member in need. The lack of Paid Family and Medical leave forces my patients and their families into choosing between meeting their basic necessities or the safety, health and – in some cases – the survival of a loved one. I have sat with spouses, partners, mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters grieving their loved one's stroke, heart attack, cancer diagnosis, spinal cord injury, and brain injury, while at the same time grappling with the reality of needing to go back to work because they can't afford to take even one day unpaid.

I've seen first-hand what it means when Oregonians can't take the time they require to care for themselves or a family member - not because they don't want to, but because their economic status simply does not allow it. I have seen the cost to our communities, to tax payers, and to our healthcare system - the avoidable declines in health, medical complications, and rehospitalizations. I have had patients who literally died alone in their homes because their family had no choice but to return to work.

As a mother, I can also speak to the benefits of Paid Leave for new parents. Most health care providers recommend that new mothers have 6-8 weeks to physically recover, yet many return to work just 2 weeks after giving birth. Because of both the physical and mental health benefits of bonding with a new child, a 2011 study of 141 countries with paid leave policies found that paid parental leave can reduce infant mortality by as much as 10%.<sup>1</sup>

Six US states have already passed a paid leave policy and yet I see Oregonians everyday who have to make the economic decision to go to work instead of taking care of themselves or their family member when they need it most.

Ultimately, Paid Family and Medical Leave is a critical component of supporting physical and mental health throughout a person's lifetime – from newborn to end-of-life. By passing the FAMLII Equity Act now, we are improving the health of future generations of Oregonians. That is why, as a Nurse, mother, and caregiver, I encourage your support of House Bill 3031.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3150137/>