



Testimony in support of HB 3031
Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance

Chairs Barker, Chair Taylor and members of the House Business and Senate Workforce Committees:

On behalf of the 6,543 members of PCUN, I express our support for HB 3031 and establishing a Paid Family and Medical Insurance program in Oregon. At PCUN, we work to empower farm workers and working Latinx families and to improve the working and living conditions of Oregon's agricultural workers.

PCUN supports the FAMLI Equity Act, HB 3031, because we believe this will benefit farm workers and their families immensely. Farm workers provide an indispensable service, yet their jobs are some of the most dangerous and least adequately compensated in the country and in Oregon. We know that workers in low paying jobs are the least likely to have access to the paid family and medical leave through their employer. They are also the most likely to take care of an ill relative to avoid the cost of other forms of care. But this often comes at great financial hardship to themselves and their families.

Farm workers are among the poorest workers in Oregon. Child farm workers risk their safety, health, and education working our fields because their parents can't earn a living wage. Hazardous conditions are routine, including pesticide exposure, extreme heat and lack of shade and adequate clean drinking water.

Much of the injustice farm workers face stems from their specific exclusion from basic protections that workers in other sectors of society receive. Under state and federal law, most workers are guaranteed certain labor protections to ensure decent working conditions. These protections have not always been guaranteed; workers struggled to win them in the 1930s. Today, rights like guaranteed minimum wage and overtime pay have been around for so long that they are taken for granted.

However, it's important to realize that farm workers are specifically excluded from many of these commonplace protections that others take for granted.

Many farm workers lack basic labor protections such as unemployment insurance, health insurance and basic wage and hour protections like minimum wage and overtime. For example, we estimate that there are at least 17,000 farm workers in Oregon who are currently excluded from receiving unemployment benefits, but the number may actually be as high as 49,000 farm workers. Many workers at small farms completely exempt from minimum wage and overtime protections. Agricultural work is hard and dangerous work; why should they receive fewer workplace protections than others?

We are proud to be part of the Time to Care coalition and stand behind the values that guide our work on paid family and medical leave, particularly that no worker should be excluded from the policy. It's time to end the injustice of excluding farm workers from basic labor protections.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 3031 and establishing a paid family and medical leave program in Oregon.

Reyna Lopez, Executive Director
Pineros y Campesinos del Noroeste, PCUN