

March 25, 2019

To: The House Business and Labor Committee and the Senate Workforce Committee  
From: Shani Harris-Bagwell  
Re: Support of HB 3031

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Shani Harris-Bagwell and I live in Portland.

Last year I got cellulitis in my foot. It was swollen to twice its normal size and was constantly throbbing in hot pain. At the same time, I had a tooth crack and desperately needed a root canal. I was in constant pain, on antibiotics for a month and living paycheck to paycheck. I couldn't afford to take time away from my job as a live in nanny, or to give up my dance heavy role in the play I was performing in. The costumer found special shoes for me because I could no longer fit into my costume shoes. Both of these jobs were critical to my income. The doctor recommended 2 weeks of bedrest. I could only afford 3 days. If I had access to paid Family and Medical leave the recovery from those events would have been two or three weeks instead of months. Even a year later, the swelling in my foot has not recovered fully because I haven't been able to rest adequately.

The way the current system is set up, not only was I unable to provide for myself with unpaid leave, but, even if I had reached out for help, my aunties or cousins legally wouldn't be able to take time off to care for me because they don't count as my family under the current laws. Although I also have an abundance of close chosen family who would take leave from work to care for me at a moments notice, they wouldn't even have assurance that a job would be waiting for them if they did. Why should we be penalized for caring for ourselves and those we love?

Like many Oregonians, I am one missed paycheck away from homeless and another major medical event would devastate me financially. I work two jobs. I am very intelligent, pay my taxes, support local businesses and I contribute to Oregon in a way that is both positive and productive. I am a useful person and it would be a loss to the Oregon workforce and economy if I wasn't in it. Let's pass HB3031 to insure that productive Oregonians thrive.

Sincerely,

Shani Harris-Bagwell