



March 22, 2019:

Chair Barker and Members of the Committee -

On behalf of Unite Oregon, I respectfully request your support for HB 3031, the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act. Unite Oregon is a statewide social justice organization led by people of color, immigrants and refugees, rural communities, and people experiencing poverty, and we work across Oregon to build a unified intercultural movement for justice.

It's inevitable that each of us will need time away from work to care for our families. When my dad was diagnosed with a brain tumor in 2015, I was lucky enough to have a generous employer that let me take as much time off as I needed to help take care of him in his last months of life. This was a traumatic time for my family, but I never had to worry about whether I was going to lose my job or meet my financial obligations while helping take care of him. I've realized since his passing that it's unfortunately not rare to have these experiences--it's a universal part of growing up.

What is rare was my ability to use accrued leave to maintain my paid status during this time. Unfortunately, this is not true for the majority of workers. Only 13% of American workers have access to paid family and medical leave through their job. And 40% of American workers lack even job-protected but *unpaid* leave from work because of gaps in coverage under the Family and Medical Leave Act. This is true for Oregon workers under the Oregon Family Leave Act.

This unmet need is nearly twice as great among women, workers of color, unmarried workers, and low-wage workers. Women of color are more likely than their white counterparts to be single head-of-household. The burden for both family care and stable income fall solely on their shoulders. We need to create legal and financial support systems that make it possible for all of us to care for our loved ones, and that's why Unite Oregon is in full support of HB 3031.

HB 3031 creates a shared way of resourcing paid family medical leave. All employers and employees make a very small contribution of an employee's annual salary into a pooled insurance fund managed by the State of Oregon. When employees qualify for paid family or medical leave, they would apply for wage replacement from the state fund—not their employer. This saves employer time and money, takes the employer out of managing employee leaves, and includes all businesses. It's a smart, sound policy that will allow Oregonians the time and space they need to care for loved ones in those critical moments in life that all of us will inevitably face.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony of support for House Bill 3031, the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act. We urge your yes vote.

Sincerely,

Sushma Raghavan Field Director, Unite Oregon