

March 25, 2019

To: The House Business and Labor Committee and the Senate Workforce Committee
From: Virginia K. Solan
Re: Support of HB 3031

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Virginia Solan.

I wish I could be present, but I must be out of town for work.

I am a Portland resident, 58, and have been working since I was 12 years old. I have lived almost 20 years in Oregon, and, unfortunately, have many experiences of hardship related to this hearing that I could share.

I will tell you today about how I lost my job at Scarrott/Ross in Bend, Oregon, when I was a 28-year-old mother of a 4-year-old.

One Monday morning, my son woke up with the measles, even though he had been vaccinated. Doctors said he needed to be kept at home for at least one week, probably two, and that he was highly contagious.

I immediately notified my employers. I took care of my son during the day and came into the office at night, taking care of all of my responsibilities other than answering the phone.

When I returned to work 10 days later, I took a phone call from a woman. She said, "Hello, Virginia, this is your replacement, Karen. I twisted my ankle over the weekend, so I won't be able to start today as planned. Would you let Brenda know that I will need to start next Monday instead?"

I don't know if you can imagine how I felt at that moment. Rent was coming due, my child was about to have surgery. When I gave them the message, confronting them, they responded with, "Virginia, we need someone here every day. Besides, you were stealing from us."

The office bookkeeper and accountant, who had worked for them for 7 years, resigned that day over their false claim that she had informed them that I had been stealing from petty cash.

It was 3 months before I could find new employment, and I had to accept two part-time jobs, meaning I could not have access to insurance.

This had a huge and painful impact on my family that reverberated for over a year, forcing us to move to Tri-Cities, Wash. This happened 30 years ago, and nothing has changed. There are no protections, there is no recourse. I shudder to imagine how many victims of this kind of attitude

toward ill children needing care has caused before and since my experience. This is why we are talking about this today.

It is way past time to give time to this issue.

As I said, this is just one story of pressure or job loss from employers due to parenting I can share. On another occasion, for example, I was denied a promised promotion upon hiring because the managing editor informed me that, since the promotion meant evening work, I would never get the position because I “had a child at home, and I belonged at home with him in the evenings.”

I do believe that a society is ultimately judged by its treatment of the most vulnerable, and when it comes to protections for workers so that they can provide fundamental care and the foundations every child needs to have a chance at success in this world, it is imperative and urgent that we at least protect the jobs of the people our most vulnerable depend on for their very health and safety.

The last thing a parent needs when a child is sick to be threatened with, or experience, the loss of their income and, for many, only means of caring for their child(ren).

Please, help employers do the right thing, the HUMAN thing. Vote to provide protections for parents so that a small crisis doesn't evolve into a familial catastrophe that never needed to happen, that causes suffering with long-lasting ramifications.

Thank you for listening.

Warm regards,

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