

From the desk of Rep. Rachel Prusak



Letter from Health Care Clinicians Across Oregon in Support of HB 2005

As clinicians, we urge the Oregon Legislature to pass House Bill 2005, a universal paid family and medical leave policy this session. This program would ensure everyone can take the time they need for treatment without jeopardizing their economic security, which is critical to the success of a strong health care system.

Currently our federal and state laws only provide access to unpaid family and medical leave, and still only cover a small minority of Oregon families. **This disproportionately impacts women, people of color, single parents and low-wage workers—those already facing the highest barriers to care.** As clinicians, we witness these unfortunate positions firsthand: Families must continue to work and leave their loved ones to recover from an illness or medical condition alone, or give up a paycheck so they can be together as a family. All Oregonians deserve time to recover from their own or a loved one's serious illness and should have the opportunity to welcome a new child to the home.

Paid family leave is important for the overall health of both parents and children. **As infants, we experience rapid rates of brain and nervous system development and form early bonds with our caregivers that set us up for success.** [Breastfeeding](#) can increase bonding between the child and nursing mother, stimulate positive neurological and psychosocial development, and strengthen a child's immune system. Women are more likely to breastfeed when they take maternity leave, and [longer leave](#) increases both the likelihood and duration of breastfeeding. Additionally, [studies](#) have shown that **children whose mothers take time from work after childbirth are more likely to receive well-baby checkups in the first years of life, and have a greater likelihood of receiving all the recommended vaccinations.**

Paid family leave has documented benefits for both children and parents. Both mothers and fathers who had access to family leave reported positive overall and mental health impacts. **One study showed that fathers who were able to take family leave for the birth of a child were more likely to spend increased time with their children in the months following childbirth.**

It is also imperative that we have a policy that goes beyond just parental leave—a truly progressive program must include a definition of family that reflects the diversity of our state, and allows Oregonians to take paid leave to recover from their own or a loved one's serious medical event.

As clinicians, we know how devastating it can be to not be able to take time off work when you need to: guaranteed paid time off is not available for all workers, even within the healthcare industry. **The United States is one of the only countries in the world without a paid family and medical leave program, and that means that people can only take time off to welcome a child or care for a loved one if they can afford to do so.** It is time that all Oregonians—regardless of their circumstances—have time to care. We hope you will join us by contacting your legislators to tell them to vote yes on H.B. 2015.

Sincerely,

Alison Appelhantz, RN Alison Edelman, MD, MPH	Portland Portland	Deborah Riddick JD, RN Debra A. Gray, MSN, RN Denise Gontiz, FNP-C, RN, MSN	Wilsonville Beaverton Coos Bay	Lanae D. Dunning, DNP, FNP, ANP-C Laura Jenson, CNM Laura Van Houten, MD MPH Lena S Wood, MEd, MN, CNM Linda Ramsey RN	Oregon City Portland Portland Portland Corvallis	Danielle R. Gonzales, BSN, RN Debby Phillips, PhD, PMHNP Karleah Scow RN, BSN Karyssa Booth RN, BSN, RRT, PCCN Kathleen "Kat" Chinn, MS, FNP-BC	Eugene Eugene Portland Medford Eugene
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Amber Vermeesch, PhD, MSN, RN, FNP-C, CNE	Portland	Donna Gilman, RNC-OB	Albany	Lisa M Logsdon BSN, CMSRN	Brownsville	Kathryn Johnson, RN	Beaverton
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Angie Reynolds MD	Portland	Elizabeth Kavanaugh CNM	Portland	Lynn Schonbrod, R.N.	Corvallis	Kendra Fehr RN	Corvallis
Anna Lobzova Saifi DO	Corvallis	Elsa Wirkkala RN BSN	Seaside	Maggie Schein, RN	Portland	Kimberly Cabral, MD	Portland
Ashleigh LeBlanc CCP FPP	Portland	Emily Schloff, MD	Portland	Maile Souza, RN, BSN	Portland	Kimberly Cleveland, RN	corvallis
Bessie-Jane Sully, RN	Astoria	Glynis Flanigan, NP	Portland	Mandy McKimmy, DNP, FNP-C	Oregon City	Kristen Amstutz RN	Portland
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Britta Ameel, MD	Portland	Heidi Lavoie RN	Bend	Margo Huntsman RNC, MSN	Klamath Falls	Kristin Applegate- King, BSN, RN	Portland
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Caitlin Humphrey RN	Corvallis	Jackie Sammons, FNP-C	Beaverton	Marie Gouz, BSN RN	Portland	Kristina Acord, RN BSN	Portland
Caitlin Reid, RN	Portland	Jacqueline Dillon RN	Corvallis	Shirley Kenney RN BSN CWCN	Portland	Kyle Swantek RN, BSN	Bend
Cameron Fehr	Corvallis	Jaekyoung Hong, MD	Medford	Smitha R Chadaga MD FHM FACP	Portland	Larlene Dunsmuir, DNP, FNP, ANP-C	Oregon City
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Christina Steurer, WHNP-BC	Portland	Jen Barr, DNP, FNP-C	Portland	Teri Mills MS, RN, CNE- Retired	Tualatin	Mary Carter, BSN, RN	Portland
Christina Terkildsen RN	Corvallis	Jessica Lehrfeld, DO	Silverton	Paul Seer, RN	Portland	Mary Romanaggi RN	Seaside
Christine Guenzi, MD	Oregon City	Jessica Reid MD	Portland	Paula Bednarek, MD, MPH	Portland	Maxine Dexter, M.D.	Clackamas
Christine Holden RN	Philomath	Joan Carr LaPorte, MN,RN	Portland	Paula Kirkpatrick RN	Eugene	Megan Chaffin, MSN, FNP	Bend
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Molly Siegel MD	Portland	Rachel Prusak, APRN, FNP	West Linn	Sarah West, CNM	Portland	Tracy MacKenzie RN	Corvallis
Monica Arce CNM IBCLC	Hillsboro	Rebecca Bolling MSN, FNP-C	Ashland	Sarah Williams, RN, BSN	Portland	Travis Nelson. RN, BSN, RN-BC	Portland
Naomi Preston RN	Corvallis	Rhonda d lowe,R.N	Oregon City	Sasha Olszewski, RN	Portland	Vanessa Layoun, MD, MPH	Portland
Nicole Brooks, RN	Eugene	Rosalind Elliott, CNM	Portland	Shana Issel, OB-RNC	Hermiston	Vicki Cohen, CNM	Beaverton
Nancy MacMorris-Adix, RN, MN, CNM	Salem	Maria I. Rodriguez, MD, MPH	Portland	Yvonne Perceval RN	Portland	Wendy Hounsel, MSN, FNP-BC	Eugene