



6/20/19
From the desk of
Rep Sheri Schouten
Sheri Schouten

June 20, 2019

Dear Legislative Assembly Members,

Family Forward is proud to support HB 2005 B, establishing a statewide and universal paid family and medical leave insurance program that will benefit *all* Oregon's families. This bill has been the product of years of work by a variety of stakeholders, and this final bill has been informed by the families, parents and business owners of our state.

The impacts of this bill will be broad and historic. Oregon's families will finally be able to do what we all want to be able to do: to put our family first without the stress of going without an income or getting behind on our bills.

While everyone in Oregon will benefit, it's Oregon's women who will benefit most. We are half the workforce and still provide the greatest amount of family care.

Women are still more likely to be discriminated against than men for their real or perceived caregiving responsibilities in hiring, raises and promotions. And they will continue to face greater discrimination until caregiving is provided by all and financially supported through programs like these. The discrimination women face is not only harmful to those of us directly experiencing it, but to our families and greater communities as well. In two-thirds of households a woman is the primary or co-breadwinner for her family. When her income is jeopardized, it impacts the whole family.

Having a baby, in this country, is a leading cause of poverty spells - when a family's income dips below what is needed to afford the basics. When women face financial instability, their children experience it too. With many mothers struggling financially, it's no wonder that rates of child poverty and poor health outcomes in the U.S. are persistently high, compared to other industrialized nations.

Right now, only 15% of people in the U.S. have access to paid family leave through work. This means that most new mothers are forced to go back to work too soon, forgoing precious bonding time with their children — which has serious implications for their children's healthy development and well-being. It also means that when a parent needs to tend to a seriously ill child, they risk financial peril.

Mothers are also economically penalized for any time they take outside the workforce to care for their family. Each break from paid work results in a statistically greater wage gap for the rest of a woman's working life. Mothers of color, who face race-based discrimination on top of maternal

JUN 20 2019



and gender-based disparities, experience even greater barriers to economic stability than their white counterparts — and they are often balancing even more family caregiving responsibilities. Black women, for example, are more likely to take time off of work to provide care for their family or themselves, even though they are less likely to be able to afford any time off.

Without universal policies like paid family and medical leave, women continue to face real barriers to staying in the workforce and maintaining their income when family caregiving needs arise. This leads to both short-term and long-term economic insecurity, wage gaps, and wealth gaps for women and the families who rely upon them.

These myriad of barriers women and mothers face is gender specific and historically overlooked by public policy. This lack of attention (and, in some cases, perpetuation) by governments and other large institutions has led to deeply felt repercussions for Oregon families and our economy.

Every Oregonian should be able to give or get the care they need without risking their ability to pay the bills. Whether it's a birth or an adoption, needing to care for someone after getting treatment for an illness, or even to get care for yourself, almost everyone will need to take time off from work to deal with a family or medical issue. Universal paid family and medical leave programs help us weather these life events and provide for our families when they need us most.

HB 2005 B delivers a paid family and medical leave program that is inclusive, equitable and accessible to working families throughout our state. Family Forward is proud to support this bill on behalf of the mothers and families of Oregon.

Thank you for your support.