

Chair Power, Members of the Committee on Early Childhood -

My name is Adriana. I'm a mom of 4 kids and I live in Washington County. I worked full time in domestic violence advocacy raising my two oldest, as I figured my way through being a single mother with little help from their father. I was lucky enough to find a great partner and husband and we had two more kids together. I stayed home for a couple of years, until I decided to reenter the workforce part time. Thanks for letting me share my story about the need for expanded OFLA protections in HB 2474, especially the permanent change to ensuring moms and parents like me have job protections when our childcare options disappear overnight.

Prior to COVID, I worked approximately 35 hours per week as a manager at an aesthetic boutique that has 8 locations across the metro area. I was really good at this job, earning awards for sales and customer relations. I was promoted quickly and enjoyed my time working at this company.

At the end of May my supervisor reached out to me as they were gearing up to reopen after the initial shutdown of personal services. She wanted to know what my availability and plans were once we reopened with a tentative date of early June. I let her know I was more than happy to come back for my full schedule and more if needed, but could not fully come back until early July since I had my two older kiddos wrapping up the school year in distance learning and I was waiting to hear back from the Summer programs my younger kids usually participated in. My plan was to put the younger kids in Summer camps right when they opened (at the time the date that had been given to us was July 2020) but this date kept getting pushed back again and again. As soon as I was told the Summer programs were not going to be an option for my kiddos, I reached out to let my supervisor know that I would not have the child care options I was planning on and have used prior years for any of my three youngest children. I asked if there were any shifts I could do from home (since I knew a couple co workers had been offered to do work from home). I was told this was not an option for me, with no real explanation as to why.

At this point it became clear that I needed to understand what my options were. Naively, I reached out to HR to find out which programs I would qualify for. As soon as I did that, the owner himself intervened and requested an immediate Zoom call with me. This was scary and something I did not expect.

The tone changed entirely, as soon as I inquired about any job security I could find through OFLA because of their new childcare rule or job protection and some monetary compensation through FFCRA. They denied my request entirely stating that I didn't provide enough detailed information to qualify for either program. I was confused by this response since I had reached out to HR for help, I didn't expect to be told no and basically to get an attorney. There was one very intense phone call between the owner and I where he cited how expensive it would be to get an attorney to disagree with them and how they had already paid an attorney lots of money to get the answers that allowed them to tell me I didn't follow directions correctly when I reached out to HR for help. Ultimately, I came to find out that they calculated my FFCRA leave incorrectly and only paid me for 4 hours instead of my typical work week prior to COVID. At this point, I didn't really have a choice to do anything but go along with it. HB 2474 is so important because FFCRA didn't last forever, and without the change to make protected leave available when our childcare options close I haven't had anything to rely on. Please support HB 2474. Thank you.