

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Afton Hakes. I am a 36-year-old Oregon resident, Art Director, and Mother writing to you in support of support of HB 3031, the FAMLl Equity Act.

I support HB 3031, the FAMLl Equity Act, because I recognize from my own birth and leave experience how crucial those first few months were for me and my family — for physical and mental recovery, breastfeeding, and bonding. These first months create the foundation on which we build our family lives, and paid family and medical leave is an integral piece of supporting working families.

When I found out I was pregnant, I was offered a job without any consideration of maternity leave. This meant if I was going to prioritize leave with my newborn baby, I was going to need to turn down the job offer. I chose to continue as a freelance Art Director, and pinch and save and carve it out for myself. My partner worked long hours and holidays and banked sick time in order to save up enough time to take paternity leave.

After a grueling 48 hour labor ending in a cesarean birth, I was unable to walk or use stairs for a week. The recovery process required my partner to be present and take care of me post-surgery, while we both provided care for our baby son. We were fortunate that we were able to plan and carve out this time and space for ourselves when no paid maternity / paternity leave was available to us.

Birth is unpredictable, and the idea that some mothers are forced to return to work just weeks afterwards is unsettling. The U.S. is one of the only countries in the world that does not provide paid family medical leave for workers. This puts families, employers, employees, and the economy at a disadvantage. I believe we need to prioritize a universal paid family and medical leave policy to give families a proper start and support the health and well-being of our workers.

Sincerely,
Afton Hakes