

March 25, 2019

To: The House Business and Labor Committee and the Senate Workforce Committee

From: June Bridenbeck

Re: Support of HB 3031

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is June Bridenbeck and I'm here tonight with Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon. I live in Scappoose, Oregon and have relied on welfare as a stay-at-home mom for my first child. I decided to start working again to support my second child. I went back to school and earned a nursing degree. However, this process of coming off of welfare and into full-time employment was extremely stressful, especially upon the arrival of my third child. I wanted to find a job where I can balance working and taking care of my next newborn. I worked as a psych nurse who served populations with intense emotional disturbance and to think that I was caring for all these people while also worrying about the safety of my child was overwhelming.

Since I wasn't given any time off, I had to find childcare and trust my newborn with them. Having to trust someone else with your baby when you would really rather be the one taking care of them was hard enough, but coming home from a difficult day at work and seeing that my child was left in the crib all day defecating themselves, I was livid. We are compromising the health and wellbeing of children across the board when we make parents choose between them and the paycheck that feeds them. People with children will get desperate and leave their children in the care of whoever is available instead of who's qualified. It's almost impossible to fully apply yourself in your work when you have all of these extra concerns about the wellbeing of your loved ones. With Paid Family and Medical Leave, employees will be able to fully be in the space they're in and work even more productively if their energy, attention, and time isn't so divided. I worked with a nurse from Vancouver, Canada, and as soon as she wanted to raise a family, she went back because of the paid family leave available there. There was no stigma and families were honored for what they were. She told me there was no way she'd stay in America to have children because she knew that family and medical leave wasn't covered here. We are falling behind other countries who know how to value relationships and families.

It also takes *one* accident, *one* medical conflict, to completely change the course of someone's financial stability. When I was a child growing up in Portland, both of my parents worked full-time. As a first grader, I had to walk home by myself and wait for my older sister to get home an hour later to get into the house. Often, when I would forget the house keys, I would open the window to our bathroom and drop down onto the bathtub to get in the house. I can't imagine the danger I would've been if I accidentally knocked the oil fuel tank that was placed there. We all know that the first couple years of childhood leaves a permanent impact on children. We have to ensure that they're safe, supervised, and given the attention they need.

I believe that the American system is not set up to accommodate families. We have come to value productivity more than the wellbeing of people and in the end, we'll end up losing both because it's simply not sustainable for the attention of employees to be constantly split in between taking care of their family and securing pay. Let's not make people choose one over the other.

Sincerely,
June Bridenbeck