

March 25, 2019

To: The House Business and Labor Committee and the Senate Workforce Committee  
From: Ben Fallah  
Re: Support of HB 3031

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ben Fallah and I live in Portland.

When my son was born a year ago it was the happiest time of my family's life. During the pregnancy I was returning to school to pursue a degree in nursing. I was excited to begin a new career and continue my work of caring for others. As graduation from my program neared, so too did my wife's due date. I had just three months between graduation and becoming a parent to find a job to support my family. I was fortunate to land my dream job as a hospital nurse during this time, but was unable to start until just two weeks before my son was born.

Because I was a new hire still in an orientation period, I feared the repercussions of taking too much time off from work. I worried how it might impact my relationship with my new employer and how it might impact my learning as a new nurse. In the end, I asked only to take two weeks off after my son's birth, which meant about 11 days with my wife at home to celebrate our new arrival and adjust to the dramatic changes our first child had brought to our lives.

Between not sleeping and the constant care needs the two of us were quickly overwhelmed, even with the support of family and friends. Going back to work at such a tender time for my family placed a large burden on my wife and strained our relationship. I was coming home exhausted from night shifts caring for very ill people to find the responsibilities of newborn care awaiting me. The strain eventually led to me becoming burnt out; emotionally and physically exhausted to the point that I had to give up my nursing role. I knew that I was not able to learn as fast as I needed to or perform at my best when facing the challenges and meeting the responsibilities of being a new father at home. Losing this opportunity hurt my family.

Through all of this, I thought about how fortunate we were that my wife had maternity leave through her work and that we had family nearby who could help. Even with these advantages we were overwhelmed by the needs of our newborn. Knowing the strain we were under, and how it impacted my career, I can only imagine what the same challenges would mean for someone going through the experience of becoming a parent without the advantages of time off of work with employment guaranteed or without family and friends to support. Paid parental leave would have allowed my family to have the breathing room we needed to be the parents we wanted to be, and to not burn out. I support the creation of a mandate for paid family leave to support those everyone in starting their relationships with their new children in the best way possible, giving them the freedom to focus on being a parent while being free from the worries of maintaining employment or earning income.

Sincerely,

Ben Fallah