

Chair Barker and members of the committee,

My name is Jennifer Barr and I'm writing to you today on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association and Nurse Practitioners of Oregon to ask for your support for House Bill 3031, the Paid Family and Medical Leave Act. I cannot stress enough the importance for paid family and medical leave.

As a nurse practitioner specializing in the surgical care of children with congenital heart disease, I see parents having to make a painful decision on countless occasions: stay at their child's bedside or return to work so they have money for rent or food. Some babies born with complex heart disease require surgical repair within the first week or so life and often have very prolonged hospital courses that can last anywhere from one month to three or more.

We recently had a patient admitted to the pediatric intensive care unit for over 6 months; her mother was by her side daily but had to quit her job in order to do so. Some parents have other children to care for and cannot afford to miss work.

Additionally, many patients come from around the state of Oregon, and going back to work for those parents means leaving their children in the hospital alone for days at a time because they cannot commute back and forth from the Portland Metro area to rural or Southern Oregon on a daily basis. Parents miss the crucial bonding of newborns and older children develop significant separation anxiety.

Many Oregonians are now also pulling "double duty" in caring for their children as well as aging parents concurrently. This puts significant strain on Oregon families and we must do better as a state to support these families.

Paid family and medical leave would significantly reduce the financial burden on many Oregon families and allow them time to focus on healing without worrying if they have enough money for food, rent, or fear of losing their job entirely.

The Oregon Nurses Association and Nurse Practitioners of Oregon support House Bill 3031 because, too often, nurses and providers see how devastating unpaid leave can be for a family dealing with serious medical issues.

Thank you for your support,

Jennifer Barr, DNP, FNP-C