

March 25, 2019

To: The House Business and Labor Committee and the Senate Workforce Committee
From: Olivia Kroening-Roche, CNM, WHNP-BC, MSN
Re: Support of HB 3031

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Olivia Kroening-Roche and I live in Portland, Oregon. I currently work as a Certified Nurse-Midwife (CNM) at OHSU. I regret I can't attend the hearing in person but I am working in clinic to care for patients.

It is my work as a CNM, caring primarily for pregnant and postpartum women, that has led me to write this letter. Over my 8 year career as a CNM I have cared for many women and their families who joyfully welcome a child into their life and then struggle through the complexities that this new life requires from the family. For many there is the desire to be at home bonding with a newborn; for all there is the reality that now someone must provide full-time care for this child. Parents must meet the feeding needs of an infant which are demanding and continual, requiring time and attention throughout each day and night. The financial commitments of their life continue while new financial responsibilities are added, often meaning that work without pay is not an option. For many families, instead of time that can be focused on learning about and caring for the new life they are bringing home, they must instead prematurely return to their employment to meet their financial obligations.

The two areas where I see new mothers suffer the most in the postpartum period are related to breastfeeding and postpartum mood disorders.

For those who chose to breastfeed, which research has deemed the optimal form of nutrition, an infant must be fed every 2-3 hours for the first few months of life. This is a challenging and often unattainable goal for parents who are forced to return to work at 2-8 weeks postpartum, trying to balance the need to pump breastmilk with the myriad of complications that can arise with breastfeeding, including pain, decreasing supply and risk of infection when unable to empty the breasts regularly.

Postpartum mood disorders such as anxiety and depression after birth are now a widely recognized complication of the postpartum period. I meet many women in the clinic who suffer significant anxiety related to the need to return to work when their infant is still young and dependent on them. Families need time to bond and care for their infant. They also need time to care for themselves to heal physically and mentally from their birth. Having the time and financial support to heal allows the space for rest and connection, both of which are vitally needed to support the creation of the family unit and healthy parents.

Sincerely,
Olivia Kroening-Roche, CNM, WHNP-BC, MSN