



March 25, 2019

To: The House Business and Labor Committee and the Senate Workforce Committee  
From: Michele Ruffin, Oregon Advocacy Manager, Forward Together  
Re: Support of HB 3031

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

Forward Together asks for your strong support of HB 3031 (The FAMLI Equity Act).

Forward Together works in Oregon and nationally to win rights, recognition and resources for all families. Since our founding in 1989, we have continually fought to dismantle the ways our society marginalizes us based on race, gender and sexuality. Today, we build courage and foster connection among our multi-racial community of change makers to secure the rights, recognition and resources all families need to thrive. HB 3031 takes a much needed step in that work by establishing a paid family leave insurance program.

Forward Together supports the broad and inclusive family definition in HB 3031. Whether it's to welcome a new child, recover from or care for a family member with a serious illness, or care for a parent at their end of life, all families need paid family and medical leave, regardless of who they call family. How we currently define family relationships in law, such as the Oregon Family Leave Act (OFLA), is not reflective of the realities we see in family structures today.

Right now, the burden that too many families of color face is the choice to cobble together care for our loved ones or to care for family member ourselves and forego household income. Caregiving expenses combined with lost wages can force families into poverty. Nationally, family caregivers spend on average nearly \$7,000 on out-of-pocket expenses related to caregiving, nearly 20% of their annual income. These out of pocket expenses hit communities of color hardest: **Latino caregivers spend nearly 44% of their income on out of pocket expenses,**



**and Black care-givers spend nearly 34%.<sup>1</sup>** And since Oregon’s families of color are significantly more likely than White families to live in poverty because of institutional racism, we know that Black and Latino families pull these caregiving resources from already stretched budgets.

20% of Americans live in households that were multigenerational--**that’s 1 in 5 families in the US and 64 million people living in homes with either grandparents and grandchildren, or with two or more adult generations.**<sup>2</sup> Families of color and immigrant families are most likely to be intergenerational and access kinship care outside of “immediate” family members. One in 3 Asian Pacific Islander households in the US are intergenerational, and 1 in 4 Black and Latinx households are multigenerational.

**Of the nearly 12,000 same sex couples in Oregon, the vast majority are not married and 16% are raising children which might not have a biological or legal relationship to one parent or caregiver.**<sup>3</sup> According to the National Center for Transgender Equality, Transgender Americans are three times as likely to be unemployed and twice as likely to live in poverty. Many transgender and gender nonconforming people have created chosen families and kinships that they rely on in times of need. Having an inclusive family definition is crucial to ensuring that LGBTQ families are not left behind.

We urge your support of HB 3031 with an inclusive definition of family.

Sincerely,

Michele Ruffin

Oregon Advocacy Manager

Forward Together

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<sup>1</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation, “Kids Count Data Center,” 2015

<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center, FactTank, April 2018

<sup>3</sup> The Williams Institute, “Oregon Census Snapshot: 2010, (2010)