

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Stephanie Duffy and I live in Southeast Portland with my husband, daughter, and son. I am writing in support of HB 3031, the FAMLI Equity Act.

I believe that supporting families during such a sensitive and important time in their lives is essential for a thriving economy, stable workforce, and healthy, happy families.

Even with careful planning, the cost of taking time to properly recover, bond, and care for new or old family members is beyond what most families can afford, and many go into debt or on public assistance as a result of this.

My husband and I waited and planned for years before making a family together. We both had good jobs and earned well above minimum wage. Unfortunately I had no idea until after I became pregnant that to receive any sort of pay during a maternity leave that I needed to have signed up for short-term disability through my employer *before* getting pregnant, since pregnancy is audaciously considered a pre-existing condition. Therefore we had to drain our meager savings to afford just seven weeks with my daughter, who was born fortuitously on Mother's Day of 2016. Going back to work when I've barely physically healed from natural childbirth, let alone still going through the mental upheaval, was so incredibly tough. My only time with this little one became our late night feedings, only to then leave her again in the morning, bleary-eyed from lack of sleep and occasionally tears. I was confined to a communal shower room in my office building for my twice daily pumping sessions, as it was the only private non-bathroom room with a lock.

When we planned for our second child, I knew better and signed up for short-term and long-term disability with my employer before getting pregnant, thinking I would be covered for the FMLA-approved 12 weeks. Unfortunately the HR department for my job is in another state, so no one could sit down with me and go through my benefits. I went through almost my entire pregnancy thinking I had coverage for 60% of my income for 12 weeks. It was only weeks before my due date that I realized that in truth I would only be paid for *four* meager weeks at 60% pay, and that would not include holidays like Christmas and New Years. While we had some income coming in this time around, we had no time to save more, and I was able to eke out nine weeks for our son, born the day after Thanksgiving in 2018.

In what was both a blessing but also a slap in the face, my husband's employer changed their family leave policy a month before our son was born, and he received an incredible 10 weeks off with *full pay*. While that is wonderful, it also felt so hurtful and backwards that he had more time and pay while I, the person who carried and labored and then had to recover from the birth, received next to nothing, simply because my employer doesn't deem that benefit worthwhile for its employees.

We are so fortunate because we were able to plan for our children, and that we have family in the area that can lend a helping hand, but we know so many more aren't nearly as fortunate. I lived in Canada for half of my childhood and it's incredible to see my Canadian peers able to take a full year with their newborns, and the difference is so drastic and sad.

I will never get those tender, early weeks back with my children, and having to go back so early affected my mental health, requiring me to seek mental healthcare for the first time in my life. The money we had to use for me to take any sort of leave was the money we were saving for a

downpayment on a home. We're still unsure when we can purchase a home for our family in the Portland area as a result.

I sincerely hope this bill will pass and that future generations won't be so hindered.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Duffy