

Dear Lawmakers,

I am writing in support of universal family leave in Oregon. Being able to take care of newborns and ailing loved ones should not be a privilege of the wealthy but a right afforded to all of us.

As a new mom I was on unpaid leave after the birth of my child and had to return to work early to make ends meet. Putting my daughter in the care of complete strangers while she was just weeks old was a horrible feeling - she was so small and helpless. That I knew in my heart she should be in my care brought tremendous guilt and exacerbated my post-partum anxiety.

Recently I spoke with a mother who had to return to work two weeks after a c-section birth - major surgery and a newborn who needs a mother's care? It doesn't feel like we are living in a first-world country when we can't take care of these basic needs.

As my parents grow older I also face the concern of what happens if one of them falls ill, will they be left in the care of strangers because I can't afford to take time to help? Will they be cared for by someone who abuses them or neglects their needs?

Everyone may not have children but everyone could be in a position of having a loved one in need of care. I hope you will vote in favor of common sense universal family leave that allows families of all kinds to be primary caregivers when the need arises.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lauren Ridgley
Oregon City, OR