



Testimony in Support of HB 2005

**Submitted by:
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Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee:

As advocates for reproductive justice, NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon understands the importance of ensuring that all Oregonians are able to make their own personal medical decisions, and I urge you to support HB 2005, which would create a universal paid family and medical leave program in Oregon.

NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon is dedicated to developing and sustaining a constituency that uses the political process to guarantee every woman the right to make personal decisions regarding the full range of reproductive choices, including preventing unintended pregnancy, bearing healthy children, and choosing legal abortion. Everyone—regardless of their circumstances—deserves the tools to be able to make those personal decisions when and if they are ready.

Currently, state and federal law only provides Oregonians access to unpaid family and medical leave. That means that people can only take time off to welcome a child or care for a loved one if they can afford to do so. This inequity disproportionately impacts women, people of color, single parents, and low-wage workers - those already facing the highest barriers to economic justice. Currently, only 13% of people have access to paid family leave at work, and one in four women will return to work within two weeks after giving birth. This means that new moms are not only unable to spend important time bonding with their new child - they're unable to take the time that they need to physically recover from giving birth.

Paid family and medical leave is a critical component of reproductive freedom. Women and families make decisions about when and if to become parents based on many factors, including the resources and support available when welcoming and caring for a child. No family should have to jeopardize their economic security to take care of a newborn, a loved one, or themselves.

Further, women still provide the majority of unpaid caregiving within the home, whether it is for a child or for an elderly parent. Women are also the primary or co-breadwinner in

more than two-thirds of families. Without universal policies like paid family leave, women continue to face real barriers to staying in the workforce and maintaining their earnings when family caregiving needs arise. This leads to both short-term and long-term economic insecurity, wage gaps, and wealth gaps for women and the families who rely upon them. Until we have paid family and medical leave, women will continue to be at a disadvantage in the workplace.

Passing a paid family and medical leave policy is an overdue step in the right direction, for Oregonians, women, and the nation as a whole. We are one of only two countries with zero weeks of paid leave. We can, and must, do better. Every Oregonian deserves time to welcome a new child to the home and recover from their own or a loved one's serious medical event. I urge you all to support House Bill 2005.