



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mom's Equal Pay Day and HB 2005

Monday, June 10, was Mom's Equal Pay Day. That's the day in 2019 when mothers' wages caught up to what fathers earned in 2018 alone. That's because mothers, on average, are paid 69 cents for every dollar earned by fathers.

Women are almost half the workforce, and 86 percent of women have children. In nearly two-thirds of households, a woman is the primary or co-breadwinner. Yet mothers are more likely than fathers to face discrimination and financial harm due to caregiving responsibilities. Mothers of color, who face race-based discrimination on top of maternal and gender disparities, face even greater barriers to economic stability than their white sisters.

I decided to run for the Oregon legislature, in part, because I too have been discriminated against as a woman and mother. I was fired for taking maternity leave when I had my youngest son. That is why I am a champion of HB 2005, the paid family and medical leave program under consideration in the Legislature. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, fewer than 15 percent of American workers have access to paid family leave. This new statewide program would make everyone working in Oregon eligible for paid time away from work to care for a new child (by birth, adoption, or foster care placement), to care for an ill or injured loved one, or to recover from a serious illness or injury.

HB 2005 is a pro-family policy, and it's a key way to reduce the maternal wage gap.

Universal paid family and medical leave will normalize the fact that every one of us will need time away from work to give or receive care. Providing pay for caregiving leave ensures more of us can take time away from work to care for our loved ones. This will reduce discrimination that mothers face as a result of their caregiving responsibilities, whether those responsibilities are real or perceived.

HB 2005 will reduce gender-based wage gaps because it applies to caregiving responsibilities beyond parental leave. This paid caregiving time will be paid at a rate that makes it possible for workers to afford to take leave. It provides leave long enough to ensure that workers dealing with a medical issue while caring for others have the time they need to heal. Every worker in the state will contribute to this program — it will not be a for-profit system which could become unaffordable for many Oregonians.

For mothers to achieve economic stability, we must do things differently. We need to make it possible to both care for a family and provide for one. Paid family and medical leave is an important step forward, and I look forward to the day when this critical family support is available to everyone working in Oregon. I'll keep fighting for paid family and medical leave, and all the policies moms need, until we no longer have to observe Mom's Equal Pay Day.

