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March 15, 2021

TO: Chair Power
Vice-Chair Reynolds and Zika
Members of the House Early Childhood Committee

FROM: Elliot Levin, PROTEC17 Research Director and Legislative Advocate

RE: HB 2474 OFLA Modernization Support

On behalf of the nearly 900 PROTEC17 represented employees of City of Portland, I write today in support of modernizing Oregon’s unpaid leave system through HB 2474. PROTEC17 represents a wide variety of professional and technical employees including engineers, planners, information technology specialists, and technicians who live and work in the Portland area. Additionally, we represent approximately 8,000 public sector employees across Washington State.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all Oregonians over the last year. However, women, people of color and LGBTQ Oregonians have experienced some of the most disproportionate health and job loss impacts from this pandemic.

With women and mothers disproportionately serving as family caregivers, the lack of job-protected leave has inevitably resulted in women leaving the workforce. Because the Oregon Family and Medical Leave Act includes thresholds for numbers of hours worked in a week and number of employees at a company, thousands of Oregon workers have been excluded and unable to take unpaid time as we continue to battle COVID-19. HB 2474 addresses this by:

- Including school and child care closures as a reason for leave.
- Ensuring that seasonal workers – those that go back to work for the same employer – appropriately accrue their time to qualify for OFLA.
- Changing the definition of “employee” to anyone employed, removing the qualification for number of hours worked in a week.
- Expanding OFLA to cover any business that has at least 1 employee.
- Covering workers who have been employed at the company for at least 30 days.
- Removing employer ability to reduce the amount of leave if a worker fails to give notice.
- Allowing employees to determine in what order they would like to use their various accrued leave banks.
- Modernizing the definition of family to better reflect the diverse array of families in Oregon.
- Implementing gender neutral language around people who experience pregnancy.

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With job losses at record numbers – particularly for women, mothers, and historically currently marginalized Oregonians – now is the time for action. HB 2474 makes sure that caregivers and those re-entering the workforce are not at an even greater economic disadvantage from COVID-19 simply because they are unable to take job-protected unpaid leave.

HB 2474 gets us closer to ensuring that all Oregonians can take unpaid job protected leave to take care of themselves and their families, and updates our statute to be more reflective of Oregonians' lived experiences and families. On behalf of PROTEC17, we ask you to vote Yes on HB 2474.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elliot Levin', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Elliot Levin
Research Director / Legislative Advocate
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