



Children First for Oregon

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Hearing for Paid Family Leave Insurance Program Draws Overflow Crowds

Supporters of Senate Bill 966 told the Senate Committee on Commerce and Workforce Development of the need for paid family leave insurance during these tough times.

Portland, OR – April 8, 2009 – Most Oregon employees cannot afford to take unpaid time off from work to care for their families, according to supporters of Senate Bill 966, who testified Wednesday, April 8th before the Senate Committee on Commerce and Workforce Development. The public hearing for SB 966 drew overflow crowds of business leaders, seniors, moms, and child advocates.

Supporters pointed to national statistics showing 78% of employees who did not take family leave when they needed it reported they did so because they could not afford unpaid leave as evidence for the need of the creation of a paid family leave insurance program.

“Most Oregon workers do not have the luxury of employer paid leave,” said Regan Gray, organizer of the Time to Care for Oregon Families Coalition. “Especially during these uncertain economic times, no one should be forced to choose between caring for their family and providing for their family.”

Supporters of the bill also pointed to the economic benefit to all businesses of a paid family leave insurance program. Businesses profit from higher productivity, greater morale, and reduced absenteeism; and all employers benefit from paid family leave by increasing employee retention and decreasing costly employee turnover. For small employers, they will be able to compete with larger companies by providing the benefit of paid leave they could not otherwise afford.

Baby-boomers are being hit especially hard by having to take unpaid time off to care for sick family members. This so-called “sandwich” generation is being squeezed between caring for their children and their aging parents, and employees are increasingly called upon to balance their need for time-off against their need to provide for their family.

Oregon workers are already provided 12 weeks of unpaid leave, although many cannot afford to utilize this law. In response, the Oregon Legislature is currently considering Senate Bill 966, which would create a paid leave insurance program funded through a 2 cent per hour payroll deduction from employee salaries (about \$42 per year), enabling workers to be eligible for \$300 per week, \$1,800 per year of paid leave.

“For most Oregonians today, a family’s financial security depends on all adults working and providing a paycheck,” said Gray. “In this struggling economy, it’s clear families need Paid Family Leave Insurance more than ever.”

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