
STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

**BEFORE THE NEW MEXICO HOUSE COMMERCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE ON HB 11 PAID FAMILY & MEDICAL LEAVE ACT**

February 19, 2025
Kristen Worthington, owner of
Worthington Farms, Mesilla Park, New Mexico

Dear Chairwoman Gallegos, Vice Chairwoman Anyanonu, and members of the Committee:

My name is Kristen Worthington and I am the owner of Worthington Farms, employing four wonderful employees in Mesilla Park, New Mexico. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss my strong support for House Bill 11, which would enact a paid family and medical leave insurance program in New Mexico.

I have owned Worthington Farms since 2019. I am a small pecan farmer who grows and manufactures innovative products using pecans that are sold at farmer's market/festivals and at local retail stores. As a small business owner, I'm proud to contribute to our local economy – particularly in a rural area of our state.

It's vitally important to me that I can provide a robust paid family and medical leave program like the one proposed today because I don't just think of my employees as family – they literally are my family. My sister, brother-in-law, and two children work at the farm, meaning what happens at my business impacts everyone around me. Currently, if our employees need to take extended leave, they are on something of an informal system where they just kind of make up the missed time when they can. I would love to be able to offer something more substantial and more formal in case something totally unexpected happens. That's why I support House Bill 11.

Being able to offer leave through this type of state-run program would mean a lot to me and my family. I could use the dollars I would have used for comp time to hire temporary workers or increase the wages for our other employees. I am like the other 66% of small business owners in the state who have fewer than five employees and do not have to pay into the program, yet we benefit from it. Even if we had five or more employees, after doing the math, the employer contribution is minimal for the return on investment. \$4 for every \$1000 of wages is worth it, particularly because the cost is so insignificant but the reward is immense. This is beneficial to my bottom line and I'm certain it will be for New Mexico's small businesses too.

I encourage lawmakers to pass House Bill 11 so that our agriculture and small rural businesses across the state can access a level playing field by giving employees the type of paid leave benefits normally only found through employment at larger businesses.

Sincerely,

Kristen Worthington
Owner
Mesilla Park, NM