
STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

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

February 19, 2025
Tracy DuCharme, owner of
Color Me Mine, Colorado Springs

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

My name is Tracy DuCharme and I am the owner of Color Me Mine, employing ten wonderful employees in Colorado Springs. 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 the state south of me, New Mexico. You may be wondering why I'm interested in sharing my perspective as an entrepreneur in a state where I don't reside. My answer to that is: I have experience with a paid leave program, and I am here to tell you that small businesses will not just benefit from the program, but thrive due to it.

In Colorado, the program passed in 2022 and was funded in 2023. Last year, we were able to start accessing benefits. Before we had a program, I was a strong advocate for passing a paid family and medical leave insurance program because my employees needed leave. For example, I had an employee who was hospitalized for a month with a serious health issue. She was worried she was going to lose her apartment, so I paid her wages out of pocket while she was out of work. She still works for me, and it's paid off in dividends, but a paid leave program would have supported me as the employer.

That is what has since occurred since Colorado has passed a state-run program. Last year, one of my employees utilized benefits after she was sexually assaulted, which is covered through our program. While she was not technically "sick" she was, rightfully so, struggling to leave her home due to fear and anxiety. Because we have the program now, she applied to the department, was approved and received partial wage replacement. Having that peace of mind allowed her to heal and not be stressed out about her expenses. As a business owner, it was basically no work on my part. Importantly, because we now have a program, I didn't have to pay out of pocket to cover her wages and she only accessed the benefit for a few weeks-not the entire 12 weeks. Additionally, I am able to compete for talent with larger companies that can afford to offer paid leave, because now all employees have that benefit.

I realize cost is always a concern for employers. I get that. I care about my bottom line. But this has been a cost-savings program for me. In practice, for one quarter I'm paying less than \$100 total for all of my employees. That's less than \$400 a year, which is significantly less than what I've paid out of pocket with no paid family and medical leave program. This is beneficial to my bottom line and I'm certain it will be for New Mexico's small businesses too.

I urge you to pass HB 11 immediately. Colorado is benefitting from this program and New Mexico small businesses would as well.

Sincerely,

Tracy DuCharme
Owner
Color Me Mine