

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
BEFORE THE SENATE STATE, VETERANS, & MILITARY AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

ON THE
FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE INSURANCE ACT

April 30, 2018

Chia Basinger, Co-Owner
Sweet Action Ice Cream

Dear Chair Marble, Vice Chair Sonnenberg and the members of the Committee:

My name is Chia Basinger, and I own Sweet Action Ice Cream here in Denver with my wife. Thank you for allowing me to share comments with you on the importance of publicly-administered family medical leave insurance programs to small businesses like mine.

I am in favor of the Family Medical Leave Insurance Program (HB17-1001), or FAMLI Act, because it will provide employees in Colorado with up to 12 weeks of paid leave per year after the birth of a child, to take time off for a personal injury or to care for a seriously ill family member. Enacting the FAMLI Act would be a great move for our state's small businesses. Here's why.

I would love if my business were able to offer paid family and medical leave; however, the burden of funding paid leave is too difficult for my ice cream shop. It's not easy for small shops like mine to offer paid leave, because we still have to hire additional staff to pick up the work of the employee on leave. Even if we could afford it, there's no temp agency for shops like mine to use to fill these short-term gaps in the retail and restaurant industries. But the ability to take paid leave following a personal injury or to care for an ill family member is especially critical to businesses like mine, as employees of the service industry are more prone to physical injury, and I've had employees need time off to care for ailing parents.

A publicly-administered program, like one that would be created under the FAMLI Act, would make it easy and affordable for small employers to provide paid leave. The FAMLI Act would fund paid leave benefits through a modest employee contribution, taking the financial burden off of employers. It would also reduce the administrative burden in scheduling shifts by making it easier for employees to plan ahead and take the time they need. I can more easily plan around situations when someone takes extended leave to take care of their sick parent, rather than being put in a situation where someone has multiple, sporadic missed shifts that require me to constantly reschedule employees because the

employee in question doesn't have access to the paid family leave they need.

When employees know they have access to these types of programs, without fear of being replaced or fired, my entire business environment improves. Programs like the FAMLI Act instill a sense of loyalty with your employees. If they know you are invested in them and understanding of personal struggles, they are more likely to stay on and even work harder for you. It also improves employee focus. They know that if they need to take time that it's available to them, and while they are working, they are not worrying about a sick loved one. They can give 100% while they are in the ice cream shop.

Additionally, the FAMLI Act will level the playing field for small businesses like mine, who currently struggle to compete for the best employees with larger chains that have the bandwidth and resources to offer these policies. This makes small businesses more competitive in Colorado's economy.

As a small business owner, I know that offering paid leave isn't just the right thing to do, but that it makes good business sense. I know that taking care of my employees creates a positive atmosphere that increases productivity and reduces employee turnover. I want my employees to have access to paid leave so they can balance their jobs with their personal responsibilities, but I need these benefits to also work for my bottom line. The FAMLI Act will provide great benefits to both me and my employees.

I urge you to consider small business support for this issue as you consider this measure.

Thank you.

Chia Basinger, Co-Owner
Sweet Action Ice Cream