

Interfaith Letter to Oregon State Senate in Support of Paid Family Leave Insurance

April 8, 2009

Senate President Peter Courtney
Senate President Pro-Tem Rick Metzger
Senate Majority Leader Richard Devlin
Senate Republican Leader Ted Ferrioli
Senator Diane Rosenbaum, Chair, Commerce and Workforce Development
Committee
Senator Chris Telfer, Vice Chair, Commerce and Workforce Development
Committee
Senator Larry George
Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson
Senator Floyd Prozanski
and all other members of the Oregon State Senate

900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR, 97301

RE: Support for SB 966 – Paid Family Leave Insurance

Dear Senators:

We are broad coalition of faith leaders representing Oregon's diverse religious traditions who have signed this letter to urge you to enact SB 966, to establish a paid family leave insurance program.

As people of faith we recognize the critical importance of the family as a social institution. The family is the primary locus of love, support and nurturance for young children as well as for adult family members. It is an important educational institution, where children learn many of the skills and abilities they will carry through life. It shapes the development of individual character, and healthy families foster a sense of one's obligations to others and to the larger community. Families also frequently provide support and care for extended family members who are elderly, ill or disabled.

However, recent decades have seen many changes in family structure – most notably the continuing increase in the number of single-parent families, and the equally dramatic rise of the two-income family. Both of these trends have impacted the ability of families to balance family needs with work demands.

Recognizing this changing reality, the Oregon Legislature adopted the Oregon Family Leave Act (OFLA) in 1995. This law requires employers of 25 or more employees to provide workers with up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for the birth, adoption or placement of a child, or to care for a family member with a serious health condition.

However, because the Oregon Family Leave Act (OFLA) only provides for unpaid leave, many workers are unable to take advantage of this law. Unless their employer voluntarily provides family leave benefits, many workers find themselves unable financially to afford to take the time off to which they are otherwise entitled.

This is where SB 966 comes in. Building on the framework provided by OFLA, SB 966 will give employees up to six weeks of benefits (\$300 per week for full-time employees) to help pay expenses while they take leave to care for a new child or ill family member. Oregon Family Leave Insurance will cover all employees who are eligible under the current Oregon family leave laws. Smaller employers will be able to opt-in to this insurance if they wish to offer these same benefits to their employees, but they are not required to do so.

The insurance benefit is funded through a two-cent per hour payroll deduction from employee salaries (about \$42 per year). This modest contribution enables workers to be eligible for \$300 per week for up to six weeks per year for a maximum annual benefit of \$1,800. The deduction is collected through existing payroll reporting methods, and the benefit, enforcement and administration is performed by the Bureau of Labor and Industries.

Why would Family Leave insurance help Oregon's families? Because right now, having a baby is a leading cause of "poverty spells" in this country (times when income dips below what's needed for basic living expenses like food and rent). Plus, due to the aging of the baby boomers, an increasing number of Oregon parents are being "sandwiched" between caring for their children and their aging parents.


Paid Family Leave helps all families – but especially low-income families – bridge the income gap caused by folks being unable to go to work because they have to care for a new baby or a sick parent or spouse. We need Paid Family Leave Insurance to help Oregon families stay out of poverty—especially in this time when so many families are already vulnerable.

Because this program is funded by a two cent per hour deduction from workers paychecks, it places no new costs on employers and would require only quite minor administrative tasks of employers, since it uses the already existing payroll deduction process. In fact, we believe it secures a healthier, more secure

workforce for Oregon employers and should be seen as promoting Oregon's economic vitality in addition to promoting stable healthy families.

We thank you for considering our views and urge you to support SB 966.

Sincerely,



David Leslie, Executive Director
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

(Please note: Signatures below represent the views of the individual signers, and congregational or organizational names are given for identification purposes only)

Ven. Hogen Bays, co-abbot, Great Vow Zen Monastery (Buddhist), Clatskanie

Rev. Dave Bean, West Linn resident, pastor, Cherry Park United Methodist Church, Portland

Rev. Shereda Benfield, Bend

The Rev. Theodore Berktold, Rector of St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Eugene

The Rev. Brian E. Brandt, Central Lutheran Church, Portland

The Rev. Alcena E. Boozer, Rector, St. Philip the Deacon Episcopal Church, NE Portland

The Rev. Dr. James Boston, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Grants Pass

Ms. Connie Brenner, Valley Community Presbyterian Member and Elder, Portland

Pastor Mark Bocker, St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Beaverton

Audre Bratcher, member, First Christian Church, Portland

Rev. Dr. Dan Bryant, First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Eugene

Roberta Badger-Cain and Leonard Cain, First Presbyterian Church, Portland, OR

Steven W. Carlson, Pastor, Emmaus Lutheran Church, Eugene

Rev. Dr. Chuck Cooper, Spiritual Leader: Micah's Village, Executive Director: Institute for Progressive Spirituality, Clackamas

Rev. Chuck Currie, Interim Minister, Parkrose Community UCC, Portland

Lisa DeVaney, The Religious Society of Friends, Quakers, Willamette Quarterly Meeting

Rev. Thomas H. Dodd, Pastor at United Lutheran Church (ELCA), Eugene

Marianne Durkan, member of St. Mary's Catholic Church, Hood River

Babs Eggleston, Chair, Mission & Outreach Committee, Newman United Methodist Church, Grants Pass

Jan Elfers, member of Christ Church Episcopal Parish, Lake Oswego

Rev. Mary Sue Evers, Pastor, Cedar Hills United Church of Christ, Portland

Rev. Arturo M. Fernandez, Retired United Methodist Clergy, member of the OR/ID Annual Conference, Salem

Robin Franklin, member, Capitol Hill United Methodist Church, Portland

Rev. Dan & Mrs. Jean Gardner, Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon, Vale

Rev. Tasha Brubaker Garrison, Rector, The Episcopal Church of the Resurrection, Eugene

Carolyn Garza, Social Worker, Calvary Chapel, McMinnville

Rev. Dr. Lowell Greathouse, First United Methodist Church, Portland

Rex Hagans, member, Prince of Life Lutheran Church, Oregon City

Gordon C. Nagayama Hall, Ph.D., member, First United Methodist Church, Eugene

Rosie Hamilton, President, Board of Trustees, West Hills Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Portland

Rev. Janis Hansen, Deacon, St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, Beaverton

Rabbi Maurice Harris, Eugene

Rev. Dale C. Harris, United Methodist pastor (retired), Hillsboro

Michelle Harvey, Salem, member of Saints Peter & Paul Episcopal Church, Portland

Pastor Tom Hiller, Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Portland

Rabbi Yitzhak Husbands-Hankin, Temple Beth Israel, Eugene

Susan Hanset, member of Augustana Lutheran Church, Portland

Rev. Wayne Hill, United Methodist, retired, Oregon City

LeRoy Hutzler, St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Parish, Portland

Rev. Dr. Dennis G Johnson, Pastor, St. John's UCC, Tillamook

Don Klosterman, Lake Grove Presbyterian, Wilsonville

Rev. W.J. Mark Knutson, Senior Pastor, Augustana Lutheran Church, Portland

Gay Kramer-Dodd, secretary at Episcopal Church of the Resurrection, Eugene; and an active member of United Lutheran Church, Eugene

Robert W. Krueger, Priest Moderator, St. Francis of Assisi Church, Portland

Harriet Langfeldt, The Dalles
Rev. Susan Leo, Pastor, Bridgeport UCC, Portland
Wenda Lloyd, retired occupational therapist, Micah's Village, Gladstone
Jennifer Magee, Methodist, Salem
Audrey Maslin, Ph.D., Unitarian Universalist Church, Eugene
Bruce McCain, Siletz, member of Atonement Lutheran Church, Newport
Rev. Deacon Marla McGarry-Lawrence, St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church, Portland
Charles McGee, President & CEO Black Parent Initiative, Grace Memorial Church, Portland
Adele Richey McMurry, Presbyterian Church (USA), Damascus
Rachel Medema, Pastoral Intern, Corvallis
Rev. Robert P. Morrison, Rector, The Episcopal Parish of St. James, Lincoln City
Anabeth Moseley, HOMEpdx, Portland
The Ven. James Mosier, Archdeacon, Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon, Ontario
Rev. David Nagler, Nativity Lutheran Church, Bend
Elaine H. Nelson, Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Washington County Social and Environmental Action Committee
Rev. John R. Nesbitt, The Episcopal Diocese of Oregon, Portland
Charles Nielsen, United Church of Christ, Portland
Rev. Ron Nitz, Pastor, Holy Trinity & Mt. Carmel Lutheran Churches, Portland
Tom O'Connor, Ph.D., United Church of Christ & St Joseph's Catholic Church, Salem,
Johnette Orpinela, retired; lay member of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Milwaukie
Rev. Dennis J. Parker, Priest in Charge, St. Stephen's Episcopal Parish, Portland
Channah N. Pastorius, member of Congregation Neveh Shalom, Beaverton
Liz Paulson, Director of Christian Nurture, Riverside Community Church (UCC), Hood River
Martha Perez (Catholic) Portland
Rev. Cecil Charles Prescod, OCC, Portland
Rev. Dr. Gary Powell, Coburg United Methodist Church, Coburg

Rev. Michael Powell, pastor, Morningside United Methodist Church, Salem
Kathleen Redman, St. John's Lutheran Church, McMinnville
Charles H. Rembert, Prince of Peace Episcopal Church, Salem
Mr. Rodney A. Reeves: layperson, a former moderator of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oregon, and a current member of First Christian Church (DofC), Portland
Robina Ingram-Rich, BSN, MS, MPH; Member of First Christian Church, Portland
Melba Rizzo, President of United Methodist Women, member First UMC, Portland
Claudia Roberts, Outreach Chair, Fremont UMC, Portland
Carmen Rost, St. John's UCC, Tillamook, OR
Rev. Jaime M.W. Sanders, J.D., Priest-in-charge, St. Mary Episcopal Church, Woodburn
Rev. Deacon Stephen Schafroth, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, The Dalles
Pastors Tom and Patricia Campbell-Schmitt, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, SW Portland
John T. Schwiebert, Pastor, Metanoia Peace Community United Methodist Church, Portland
Rev. Dr. Marilyn Sewell, First Unitarian Church, Portland
Rev. Dr. Donald R. Shaw, Retired Presbyterian pastor, Redmond
Kathleen Shelley, First United Methodist Church, Eugene
LoErna Simpson, Active for Peace & Justice convenor at FUMC Corvallis, and Executive Bd. member of OR-ID Methodist Federation for Social Action, Corvallis
Joan Spearing, member of Mission of the Atonement (Beaverton), resident of Lake Oswego
Helen R. Spector, member of Interfaith Council of Greater Portland
Rev. Vicky Stifter, Hood River
Gerald Stolp, Emmaus Lutheran Church, Eugene
Mr. Joe Stroud, Parkrose United Methodist Church, Portland
Caroline Sullivan, Catechist, St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, Beaverton OR
Rev. Bonnie Tarwater, Congregational Church of Lincoln City, United Church of Christ
Rev. Tom Tate, Pastor Rose City Park United Methodist Church, Portland
Vesna Vila, SOAR Refugee Resettlement Program Manager, Portland

Sister Kathleen Walsh, Sisters of the Holy Names, Catholic, Portland

Pastor John and Jackie Wecker, ELCA, Astoria

Janet Whitney, Interfaith Action for Justice, First Presbyterian Church, Bend

Rev. Dana Worsnop, Minister, Atkinson Memorial Church, Unitarian Universalist,
Oregon City

Rev. Jennifer Yocum, Forest Grove United Church of Christ, Forest Grove

Gary Young, Board Certified Chaplain, Retired, Episcopal Church USA, Hood
River