

February 3, 2021

Dear Chairman Lefor and Members of the House Industry, Business, and Labor Committee:

I write today on behalf of the ACLU of North Dakota, which strongly supports House Bill 1441, a bill that would create a paid family medical leave program in the state. We urge a **do pass** recommendation on this bill.

North Dakotans work hard. They, like many Americans, put in more hours on the job than workers in other industrialized countries and use fewer vacation and personal days. This is the norm across the United States. However, when workers are faced with the unexpected illness of a family member or require time off to care for a newborn they are often left with the choice between two bad options: keep working and receive a paycheck, or provide essential care to an infant or ill loved one.

HB 1441 presents a third option — to opt in to a paid family leave program that is a win for them as a worker and for the business that employs them. HB 1441 will help families and businesses alike get through a serious health event or the birth of a child without having to leave their job or lose their employees. This program, which does not require a business to participate, grants a tax credit to employers while providing 66 percent of an employee's average weekly wage for up to 12 weeks. It is a common-sense solution to a widespread problem that far too many people face.

We know that the most vulnerable workers are low-income earners and hourly workers who are overwhelmingly women and disproportionately people of color. Additionally, more than 63 percent of children in the United States are living in a family in which both parents work. At the same time, the number of children living with a single parent is increasing. Elder care is a growing responsibility of American workers, no matter the demands of their job. Simply put, North Dakotans and their families need HB 1441 to ensure that they can work and care for those they love.

Beyond the benefits for the people of this state, HB 1441 presents an opportunity to strengthen the business community as well. In addition to the tax credit businesses will receive for a portion of their contributions, the creation of a paid family leave program will help small businesses that may not have the resources to offer their own benefit by creating a larger pool of contributions. This will help businesses recruit and keep talented and hard-working employees. Additionally, recent research data shows that providing workers with paid leave has positive effects on long-term productivity, including improvements in employee motivation, recruitment, and retention.

North Dakotans celebrate hard work, but we also value fairness and justice. The creation of a paid family leave program in this state is first and foremost



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about equal opportunity for all of us. Because of that, it is without a doubt a civil rights issue.

We respectfully urge you to vote **do pass** on HB 1441 for working families across this state.

Sincerely,



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