

Tuesday, February 11th, 2025

Dear Chair Baker and members of the Workforce, Labor, and Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee,

I am writing to express my opposition of H.F. 11, which would postpone the implementation of Minnesota Paid Leave law by one year.

Paid Family and Medical Leave covers longer term life events that affect all of us at some point. It protects us from getting fired and being able to rely on financial means when we need to take time off to care for ourselves or others like family physically, mentally, and emotionally. This may look like healing and bonding time with a newborn or adopted child, end of life support and care for a loved one, caring for aging parents or a loved one who is ill, and/or necessary recovery and healing time after an unforeseen injury and/or illness.

As a Hmong American first-generation daughter, aunt, daughter-in-law, wife and now mother residing in Minnesota, I have known far too many instances where families struggle to make a living and stay afloat while growing and caring for their families. My mother sacrificed personal academic and employment achievements just so she could be a full-time stay-at-home wife and mother to all six of my siblings and I while having absolutely zero knowledge of the English language and navigating a new life in a new country as a refugee from Laos. My father (also a refugee from Laos) sacrificed crucial bonding and family time with my mother, siblings, and I just to work countless hours, shifts, and days so he could bring in enough money to provide a roof over our heads, food in our mouths, clothes on our backs, and shoes on our feet. My oldest sister sacrificed reduced paychecks and income just so she could take time off to rest, heal, and recover from a traumatic labor and delivery of her firstborn child; not to mention bond and care for a newborn child that was placed into the NICU for weeks thereafter.

I, too, have experienced similar hardships and sacrifices when I first started growing and raising a family of my own. At the time, I had just started employment at an agency in under a year and when I discovered my pregnancy, I was anxious and nervous about my ineligibility to request time off and to have sufficient paid time off available to use. Of course, I was right. Although I was approved twelve weeks off for maternity leave, I was ineligible for short-term disability and unfortunately, I did not accrue sufficient personal paid time off to use towards my leave. That meant less time to fully rest, heal, recover, and bond with my newborn child. I ultimately only took eight weeks off instead of twelve. Fast forward to recently in 2024, I labored and delivered my fourth child in which I had saved and accrued sufficient personal paid time off to use towards my leave. However, in 2023, my employer had begun offering twelve weeks of paid family and medical leave. I was so relieved! With all the personal paid time off I had saved and accrued ahead of time in addition to the paid family and medical leave, I was able to take off five months to fully rest, heal, recover, and bond with my newborn; not to mention adjust to a new life routine of parenting and caring for four children under the age of five. I honestly could not imagine how I would have been able to manage life bills and expenses while maintaining my physical, mental, and emotional health and wellbeing had I not been provided paid family and medical leave last year.

No one should have to struggle making a living while growing and raising a family here in this country, here in this state. No one should have to choose between their job and their family. We are living in a time where we need change to happen now. Not a year later. Every minute, hour, and day counts. This policy in particular builds a family-friendly economy that is good for business, individuals, and families. It supports a balanced economy that works for everyone, not just those who can afford it. It ensures hardworking people have more time and money to invest in themselves and their families. It helps level the playing field across businesses while supporting work with dignity. So, to conclude, I strongly urge you to oppose H.F. 11 and reconsider.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



G Lee Xiong

Parent and Caregiver Ambassador at Children's Defense Fund - Minnesota