



Thank you for the opportunity to express our comments to the committee today. We would like to advocate for important changes to the Minnesota Paid Family Leave Law, to minimize the potential impacts on local governments, essential services, and overall state and local finances.

Firstly, one of the most pressing concerns is the negative impact that long-term absences, such as those exceeding 20 weeks per year, can have on a county's ability to provide essential services. Counties are tasked with meeting the needs of our most vulnerable populations, from health and human services to emergency responses, long absences due to paid family leave could lead to significant staffing shortages, affecting public safety and vital services. Counties already operate under very stringent financial restrictions with staffing being one of the largest budgetary impacts. The current structure of the law creates a situation where employees could potentially be off work for over 30 weeks per year, if both state and federal leaves do not run concurrently. This extended period of absence could further exacerbate staffing and service delivery challenges, creating a strain that might lead to a failure to meet the needs of Minnesota's residents, particularly those who rely on these services the most.

Counties are entrusted with providing critical public safety services, including 911 dispatchers, the sheriff's office, correctional facilities, child protective services, adult protective services, and so much more. These are not positions that can be filled quickly or easily. They require extensive training, certifications, and licensing, which can take months or even years to complete. 95% of counties in Minnesota lack the resources to hire additional staff to fill in for extended leave. Smaller staff sizes cannot simply absorb additional duties, especially when current caseloads are already at state-mandated maximums.

The financial burden placed on counties also cannot be ignored. With the requirement to pay a 50% cost share for paid family leave, counties will face higher tax burdens, which are likely to be passed on to local property owners. Additionally, as Minnesota is already one of the most heavily taxed states in the nation, this increase in both state-level income taxes and local property taxes could place an undue strain on both residents and county budgets.

While we recognize the importance of paid family leave, Minnesota's law is too expansive in scope, with its larger benefit payments, longer leave times, and mandatory participation for

all employers. Many other states that have implemented paid leave programs have done so with more restrictions, narrower benefit ranges, and flexibility for businesses to opt-out.

Given the complexities of implementation, I urge this committee to consider starting smaller, with a narrower scope. This would allow us to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, ensure that it is adequately funded, and give us the flexibility to address any challenges before expanding the program further. Starting with a more targeted approach would help balance the needs of employees and employers and ensure that the critical services are not compromised.

I appreciate your attention to these concerns and the opportunity to provide feedback on this important issue. Thank you.

Candice Pesch & Kristina Kohn

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