

I am writing in support of HB 1441 for Paid Family Leave.

Honoring the dignity and worth of every citizen means providing support for folks who want to be cared for by loved ones they trust, as well as for those who want to provide care for the people they love. HB 1441 supports and promotes the importance of family and taking care of one another during our most significant times and life events.

When I had each of my children, I used every hour of saved sick and annual leave I had earned so that I could spend their first three months with them. I couldn't imagine not having that time to heal, to bond, to breastfeed, and to establish the healthy routines babies need to thrive. As rich and rewarding as that was, in both cases, it left me with no hours left at work to use for doctor visits or illnesses. It required time without pay and I was already living check to check. Not having a partner to assist with bills would have put me in the position of choosing between housing costs, food, medications, or other monthly expenses. It would have changed my ability to take advantage of the important time off after the birth of my sons.

When my mother suffered a major health event, she was relieved to have the comfort and trust of her family to care for her. This was only possible because I have the benefit of some family sick leave in my employment. Sadly, such a privilege is not afforded to over 40% of our workforce.

Long term care facilities are very expensive and are not appropriate for every health situation or life event. Additionally, it is more restrictive to individuals. Privately paid in home services are often cost prohibitive for thousands of people across the state as well. Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) require functional limitations that require need to last longer than 90 days and can take weeks before a provider is in the home supporting families. Additionally, access to providers is very limited in certain areas of the state and is non-existent in still others, leaving families with no other options.

HB1441 supports families to take care of each other, which is an important value for North Dakotans. Please support HB1441.