

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

On behalf of the undersigned healthcare providers of North Dakota, we urge you to support House Bill 1441, which seeks to implement an optional paid family medical leave program. This legislation takes an essential step forward for all North Dakotans by providing vital financial support for working families during vulnerable times such as caring for a sick loved one or newborn baby.

As physicians and health professionals, we see firsthand the physical and emotional stress caused by having to make an impossible choice between family and income. Many of us have cared for critically ill infants that have contracted infections from daycare because their mothers returned to work before they could get their first vaccinations. Due to the COVID19 pandemic, we have seen numerous patients lose their jobs because they had to stay home to care for a family member.

Paid family medical leave has far reaching benefits on health and the economy. It is associated with lower infant mortality rates, prolonged breastfeeding duration, and improvements in maternal mental health. Paid leave is associated with higher work force participation among women. With an aging population, more North Dakotan workers will become unpaid caregivers. Paid leave allows employees to maintain attachment to the labor force ultimately benefiting the economy.

The lack of paid family leave has serious costs: it hinders workforce advancement and income, threatens economic security, and negatively impacts the family of workers who desperately need care. We urge you to make the right choice for North Dakota workers and families and support House Bill 1441.

Sincerely,

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