



March 8, 2021

Kristie Wolff – Executive Director, North Dakota Women’s Network
Support HB 1441
North Dakota Senate Industry, Business and Labor Committee

Chairman Klein and members of the Senate Industry, Business and Labor Committee, my name is Kristie Wolff, I am the Executive Director of the North Dakota Women’s Network.

North Dakota Women’s Network is a local non-profit with members from across the state. Based on our mission to improve the lives of women in North Dakota, I am here today in support of HB 1441.

At some point, nearly every working person will need to take time away from work to address a personal illness, bond with a new child or care for a family member with a serious health condition. However, the U.S. is the only developed nation in the world without a national paid family leave policy. In addition, 46 percent of North Dakota’s private sector workforce are unable to earn even a single paid sick day.

According to National Partnership for Women & Families, the benefits of paid family leave in states that have introduced the policy include improved worker morale, time for parents to bond with their children, increased breastfeeding, and cuts in children’s hospital admissions.

In North Dakota, over 11,000 babies are born every year. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends women take at least six weeks off work following childbirth. Without the availability of paid leave, this option is an unaffordable luxury for many women. Access to paid family leave gives women more choices and security.

Businesses with a paid family leave program retain new mothers at a higher rate. A recent study showed that statewide paid family leave policies can dramatically lower the number of women who drop out of the workforce after having a baby. The study saw 20% fewer women leave their jobs in the first year after having a baby when the policy was available.

Over 62,000 North Dakotans serve as family caregivers and both parents work in nearly 75 percent of North Dakota households with children. Workplace benefits are an important part of balancing work and family. Benefits such as paid family leave can help employees meet their personal and family health care needs, while also fulfilling work responsibilities.

Working families should not be forced to choose between caring for their loved ones and risking their economic security. So today I ask the committee for a DO PASS recommendation on HB 1441.

Thank you,

Kristie Wolff

kristie@ndwomen.org