

Madam Chair Roers and Members of the Committee,

My name is Thomas Stromme, I am a resident of Fargo and a lifelong North Dakotan. I work in banking and hear firsthand from my clients about the challenges they are facing and the need for workforce and childcare solutions. I am testifying today to urge your support of a proposal for a study to investigate the impact of implementing a Paid Family Leave program in North Dakota.

When the original paid family leave program bill was introduced in the House, I heard valid questions and concerns about the bill, some of which I am skeptical of myself. For instance, legislators questioned the impact on small businesses and their employees, the financial solvency of the program, and the impact that Paid Family Leave programs have had in other states. Legislators also sought clarification about the tax benefits available to businesses who might opt to cover enrollment costs for their employees.

These concerns support the need for a study to be conducted so that you, as legislators, have the ability to understand the impact that Paid Family Leave would have on both employers and employees, particularly on small businesses.

The legislature has placed a high priority on workforce and childcare issues this session, and several bills to close these gaps are progressing forward. But these proposals will not entirely solve the enormous challenges we face, and two years from now, the legislature will be taking on these issues again. By implementing a study now, we can continue to make incremental progress in the interim towards understanding the best levers to pull in order to support businesses looking to recruit and retain employees across the state. This study will allow lawmakers to weigh Paid Family Leave against other mechanisms for addressing the challenges we face.

I respectfully ask you to support the proposal for a study related to the impact of implementing a Paid Family Leave program in North Dakota. We need this study to ensure that North Dakota is looking at all possible solutions to make informed decisions on critical workforce and childcare issues.

Thank you.