

April 26, 2022

Dear Chair Nelson, Vice Chair Coleman, Minority Lead Rest, and members of the Committee,

I am writing as a pediatrician who works in coalition with others in support of issues important to Early Childhood Education and Care. We support the Committee's interest in the concept of Paid Family and Medical Leave for all Minnesotans, but we feel that the use of tax credits for businesses will not expand access for Minnesota families that need it most.

70% of Minnesotans currently do not have Paid Leave through their employers. Only the largest Minnesota companies provide some Paid Leave. These companies do so to compete in hiring and retention of employees. While these companies may be able to provide this benefit, they have calculated the cost of not doing so. They conclude there is benefit in providing Paid Leave.

Smaller companies, especially those with employees numbering in the dozens or fewer have much smaller operating margins. However, they too recognize the importance of Paid Leave for their employees. Yet they are not able to manage the cost without governmental support. (Please refer to The Mainstreet Alliance's advocacy for Paid Leave to House Early Childhood Finance and Policy Committee this session.)

As a pediatrician I am aware of the financial struggles our young families live with. 50% of Minnesota babies are born to mothers on Medicaid (Medical Assistance in Minnesota). When these parents arrive home with their newborns they are immediately confronted with the decision of when to return to work. These families, as all Minnesota families, are aware of the need to nurture their babies in the first months of life, but they also struggle to put food on the table, to pay rent, and to meet many other expenses. Even young families of somewhat greater means often struggle. This is an example of how Paid Leave can bring calm to a struggling family and less stress at a time when calm, less stress, and loving nurturing go hand in hand.

Without Paid Leave at this time, the stress these families experience often leads to mental health and physical health issues for mothers and babies, some of which last a lifetime. This is not the "great start" we want for all babies during the critical "first 1000 days" of life.

Please give careful consideration to adequately funding Paid Family and Medical Leave, during this crucial time in families' lives. A great start and a healthy first 1000 days will pay dividends beginning in the preschool years. Economists such as Arthur Rolnick, former Director of Research at the Mpls Federal Reserve Bank, forecast a 10-16% annual return on such investments.

Respectfully,

Dale Dobrin, MD, Fellow American Academy of Pediatrics