

# Paid family leave bill tries to avoid political tug of war in Legislature

As HB 2005 inches through process, business and labor groups offer support

By MARK MILLER  
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Nearly all workers in Oregon would gain the right to take paid leave for family and medical reasons under a proposal advancing through the Legislature, but it likely won't become available until 2023.

Under House Bill 2005, employers would have to let an employee — provided the employee made \$1,000 or more during the current or previous year — take up to 18 weeks' leave to care for a new child or ill family member; to deal with serious health problems, a difficult pregnancy or childbirth, or abuse; or some combination thereof. For up to 12 weeks, plus two more for a medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth, a person could receive much or all of their pay while on leave.

The paid leave system that HB 2005 sets up is similar to workers' compensation, with employers and employees both contributing a fraction of wages to a state-run insurance fund. Workers taking family or medical leave would apply to the state to get their pay while they're away from work.

It will be up to state officials to decide what the contribution rate is, but it can't exceed 1% of a worker's wages. The employee would contribute three-fifths of that amount; the employer, two-fifths. An employee's contribution would be deducted from her paycheck, just like payments into the workers' benefit fund or a retirement savings account.

Employers with 25 or fewer employees wouldn't have to pay into the fund, but their employees would still be eligible to take paid leave.

"Really, truly, we were working to try to make sure that every employee is covered," said Andrea Paluso, executive director of Family Forward.

Paluso's advocacy group worked with Democratic and Republican lawmakers, labor unions, businesses, and others on the paid leave proposal. Paluso said it's also important to her group that the policy is "equitable," so that it's not only available to higher wage earners.

## Parents need time

Under the latest version of the proposal, workers who make less than 65% of Oregon's average weekly wage would be eligible for full pay while on leave. Workers making more than that would get 65% of the



AP Photo/Andrew Selsky

Nearly all workers in Oregon would gain the right to take paid leave for family and medical reasons under a proposal advancing through the Oregon Legislature, but it likely won't become available until 2023.

average weekly wage plus half of whatever they make above that threshold, up to 120% of the average weekly wage.

According to the state Employment Department, the average weekly wage in Oregon is \$976. It's recalculated every year based on pay figures throughout the state, and it is tentatively set to increase to \$1,013.

House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson, D-Portland, has been working to pass paid leave for years. It's a top priority of hers this legislative session, and other Democratic leaders are backing the effort as well.

"Oregonians across party and demographic lines believe strongly that parents need time away from work to welcome a new child, to make sure they can care for a newborn without going into debt, to adjust, to bond, to heal, and to set their kids and their families up for success," Williamson said. "And Oregonians believe strongly that no person should have to choose between paying their bills and taking care of themselves or a loved one."

House Speaker Tina Kotek said Monday, June 10, that she was "optimistic" that HB 2005 would pass even as adjournment approaches. Senate President Peter Courtney is also backing the effort, said spokeswoman Carol Currie.

The Legislature must conclude its business for the year by June 30. Williamson has received a boost from business groups, which are backing the paid leave proposal unveiled Tuesday. "Paid family and medical leave is a national trend and it was clear that we would see legislation on this issue in Oregon soon," the state's largest business group, Oregon Business & Industry, noted in a statement.

Several elements of the latest proposal are softened considerably from earlier versions. Most notably, implementation of the paid leave program will be delayed. The state would

begin collecting contributions for the insurance fund in 2022. The soonest an employee could take paid leave under the new system is 2023.

In the legislative changes, contributions into the insurance fund have also been tweaked to favor employers. Originally, Williamson proposed having employers and employees pay equal amounts. As part of a deal with Democrats not to oppose a new tax on businesses to pay for K-12 education earlier this spring, Oregon Business & Industry lobbied to have the employee pay more than the employer in HB 2005.

"Obviously, there was a lot of compromise involved," Currie said.

For her part, Paluso said she's not surprised that businesses were willing to support a compromise plan. "We've seen a lot of data that indicates that when people have this policy, they come back to their jobs," Paluso said. "And when they come back, they come back ready to work."

The proposal has backing from some labor groups as well, including the Oregon AFL-CIO.

## Losing valuable employees

Not all business groups are on board. The National Federation of Independent Business has opposed the paid leave proposal from the beginning. The small-business lobby is concerned about taxing businesses to pay for the program, even if many small businesses are exempt, and it argues the bill doesn't do enough to protect small businesses who will lose productivity if an employee takes extended leave.

"There's not a way to craft this policy where employers aren't without valuable employees for certain amounts of time," said NFIB state Director Anthony K. Smith. He appreciates that the latest version of the policy is a compromise, but it's not one the entire business community is comfortable with.



AP Photo/Richard Drew, File

In this June 6, 2019, file photo, specialist Anthony Rinaldi, left, and trader Fred DeMarco work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

# Stocks post small losses; investors look to Fed

By DAMIAN J. TROISE  
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Stocks ended a choppy week of trading with modest losses Friday as investors look forward to getting more clues about the direction of interest rates.

Technology shares drove the declines, and energy stocks also fell a day after leading the market. Some late-day gains in banks and insurers helped temper the market's losses.

Investors dealt with fresh concerns about the impact on businesses of the U.S. trade dispute with China. The chip-maker Broadcom warned that demand for chips has slowed because of U.S. restrictions on sales to Chinese technology firms and hesitation among customers to place new orders. It shaved \$2 billion from its annual revenue forecast.

Trading this week was uneven as investors swung between safe-play holdings and riskier bets. Stocks rose Monday but then seersawed as investors saw signs that the U.S. and China won't settle their differences on trade anytime soon. There is concern that a protracted dispute could further hurt global economic growth and corporate profits. A

suspected attack on two oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz added more uncertainty.

The S&P 500 index fell 4.66 points, or 0.2%, to 2,886.98 Friday and ended the week with a slim gain of 0.5%. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 17.16 points, or 0.1%, to 26,089.61. The Nasdaq composite slid 40.47 points, or 0.5%, to 7,796.66. The Russell 2000 index of small company stocks dropped 13.30 points, or 0.9%, to 1,522.50.

The major indexes are still showing strong gains for June — the Dow is up 5.1% and the S&P 500 is up 4.9%. Last week, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell set off a market rally after he signaled that the central bank is willing to cut interest rates to help stabilize the economy if the trade war between Washington and Beijing starts to slow economic growth.

The Fed holds its next meeting of policyholders next week. No action on rates is expected, but the futures market indicates that investors are almost certain the Fed will cut rates at its July meeting, so they'll carefully parse a statement from the central bank and comments from Powell on Wednesday.

## Harrison Family Medicine Welcomes Andrea Carrasco, M.D.

- Accepting patients
- Accepting all insurances
- Schedule an appointment today!

Starting  
July 1, 2019

HARRISON  
FAMILY  
MEDICINE

Harrison Family Medicine  
1100 Southgate, Suite 2  
Pendleton, OR 97801  
Phone: 541-215-1564  
Fax: 541-215-1567  
Office Hours: Mon-Fri 8AM-5PM



## St. Anthony Provider Spotlight



Michael J. Brunzman, M.D.

Michael J. Brunzman, M.D. is now accepting new patients.

### Obstetrics and Gynecology

Education: Wright State University School of Medicine

Board Certification: Board Certified American Board of Obstetrics & Gynecology

Insurance Accepted: Most major insurances, Medicare, Medicaid

Special Services: Obstetrics and Gynecology

CHI St. Anthony  
Hospital

3001 St. Anthony Way  
Pendleton, OR 97801

Call for your appointment today  
541.966.0535

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT WWW.SAHPENDLETON.ORG

# PHONAK MARVEL



Thanks to modern technology and industry-leading expertise, Phonak is able to bring you the best possible solutions for your hearing needs



Renata Anderson, MA  
2237 SW Court, Pendleton • 541-276-5053  
www.renataanderson.com



Phonak Audéo™ Marvel  
Love at first sound

