



Board Members

Colorado State Senate Finance Committee: Senators Brittany Pettersen, Jeff Bridges, Dennis Hisey, Pete Lee, Paul Lundeen, Ray Scott, and Faith Winter

Mez Charney
MC Evolution

May 12, 2021

Katharine Knarreborg
Merlin Instrument Company

Re: Support SB21-251

Dear Senate Finance Committee:

Yoav Lurie
Uplight

On behalf of Good Business Colorado I am writing to request your support of SB21-251: A General Fund Loan for Implementing Paid Family and Medical Leave.

Blake Manion
Soul Salve

Good Business Colorado is a statewide grassroots organization of over 370 values-driven business owners working together to build a prosperous economy, equitable communities, and a sustainable environment. Good Business Colorado members invest in their employees and their communities. They are true drivers of Colorado's economic growth and prosperity because they provide good jobs. They do their best to pay their workers a livable wage even when their competitors are not. We get to watch our members prove day in and day out that running a business in a way that takes care of people and the planet does not have to come at the expense of profit.

Sarah Marcogliese
Native Earth Landscaping

Pete Turner
Illegal Pete's

Edwin Zoe
Zoe Ma Ma

But there are some things our members can't do by themselves, and for many GBC members, providing paid family and medical leave is one of them. The products available on the market today are expensive and inadequate to cover the actual paid family and medical needs of business owners and their employees. There are also nearly 500,000 sole proprietors in Colorado that have no way of purchasing any sort of disability insurance at all!

That's why Good Business Colorado advocated for a statewide paid leave program at the inception of our organization, and that's why we invested hundreds of hours talking with over 1,000 businesses across the state about Proposition 118 for Paid Family and Medical Leave. We heard from so many small business owners how important Prop 118 would be for them. Here are a few representative examples:

"My pottery painting studio is a creative environment that is fast-paced and fun. Employees really enjoy it, but in a tight labor market attracting talented, vibrant, outgoing employees is

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difficult because I'm competing for them with other big companies looking for similar qualities in their workers. When you work with such a small number of employees, they become like family and you care about their ability to make ends meet. An affordable paid leave policy like this one is not just the right thing to do, it's the only way for a small business like mine to offer a benefit that goes a long way to help me retain the best employees."

Tracy duCharme, Color Me Mine
Colorado Springs

"As a childcare provider, you feel a calling for the work we do. You shouldn't have people show up to work before they're ready. We want our employees to have time to fully recover from things like an illness or grieving for a loved one, but it's hard to get better if you're worried about losing your income or your job. This policy is an affordable option to provide a benefit that helps me keep the dedicated employees I have. And when you look at the costs of posting a job, rehiring, retraining someone, it's actually saving me money in the long run, while protecting my bottom line when an employee uses the benefit."

Ashley Henshaw
Stepping Stones Learning Center of Littleton
Littleton

In Colorado we pride ourselves on our small business economy. One way to support your local businesses is to buy local, but we also need to draft policies that support small employers and new ventures. That's why having an option that allows businesses like mine to provide an essential policy like paid leave at a minimal cost is so important. It's this type of support that helps small or new businesses become viable, sustainable, and successful in the long run. This policy would cost me less per employee than the cell phone reimbursement I currently offer, and it would provide a much needed safety net for my employees. And it's good for my business, because it takes the burden off me to figure out how to provide this benefit, so that I can focus on growing my staff and my business. It also helps me compete with larger companies for workers, because I would be able to offer better benefits to my employees.

Jessi Burg
Pears to Perennials, Inc
Westminster

The paid family and medical leave program voters approved in November addresses the reality of today's workforce and the fact that most everyone will at some point need to take leave for an illness or injury, or to care for a loved one. It makes the program accessible to even the smallest of

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businesses, and provides a pathway to entrepreneurship for individuals that would otherwise have to play it safe and stick with their current job.

Please vote yes on SB21-251: A General Fund Loan for Implementing Paid Family and Medical Leave, because for Good Business Colorado members, and small business owners and entrepreneurs throughout Colorado, the paid family and medical leave insurance program can't come soon enough!

Best Regards,

Debra Brown, Executive Director
Angelique Espinoza, Policy Director

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

**BEFORE THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE ON SB21-251: GENERAL FUND
LOAN FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE PROGRAM**

May 12, 2021

Jeff BeBout

Owner of Glass Arrow Coffee

Thank you Chairwoman Petterson, Vice Chair Bridges, and members of the Committee for the opportunity to speak with you today about this issue.

My name is Jeff BeBout and I have been the owner of Glass Arrow Coffee here in Denver for just over a year. I am here to express my support for SB 21-251, which will ensure Colorado's paid family and medical leave program (PFML) has the funding it needs to get up and running.

A state-run paid family medical leave (PFML) program would provide a huge benefit to both small business owners and employees, which is why I voted in favor of Prop 118 back in November. But, the program needs financial backing so the state can implement it and ensure small businesses like mine are able to benefit.

As a small business owner with a business that has operated longer in a pandemic than out of a pandemic, I can't afford the same type of benefits packages that larger companies can. But at the same time, I strongly believe in the principle of equitable working conditions. When I'm in a position to grow my business and hire employees, I want to provide thriving wages and paid time off. I would love to hire people and create jobs in my community, but without programs like PFML in place, I fear I cannot provide these types of benefits myself.

And I am not alone. In Colorado, 43% of small employers don't have a paid leave policy and only 24% offer full paid family leave. Amongst micro business like mine with less than 10 employees, 58% offer neither maternity nor paternity leave.¹ Many small businesses simply can't afford to pay for extended leave out of pocket. This is not only unfair to small business owners who need to compete in a difficult job market, but it is also unfair to employees who may have to take a job without this security.

I recently became a father myself. In fact, I started my business because I wanted more flexibility in my schedule. It is extremely important to me that I can be there to support my wife and son. I hope to give my future employees the same opportunity.

Small business owners like me largely support a paid leave program, and it would be a shame for the program to fall through the cracks before it ever sees the light of day. This program had the voter support to pass on the ballot. All we need now is the funding to get the program off the ground. I strongly encourage you to support SB21-251 and support Colorado's small businesses.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today about this issue.

Jeff BeBout

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

**BEFORE THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE ON SB21-251: GENERAL FUND LOAN
FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE PROGRAM**

May 12, 2021

Lindsey Vigoda

Colorado Director, Small Business Majority

Thank you Chairwoman Petterson, Vice Chair Bridges, and members of the Committee for the opportunity to speak with you today about this issue.

My name is Lindsey Vigoda and I'm the Colorado Director for Small Business Majority, a small business organization with offices nationwide, including here in Colorado. Our mission is to empower America's diverse entrepreneurs to build a thriving and equitable economy. As a member of the steering committee for Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML)'s campaign and implementation, I am here to express our support for SB 21-251, which would require the state treasurer to transfer \$1,500,000 from the general fund to the family and medical leave insurance fund.

Without this capital infusion, PFML—a program that more than two-thirds of Colorado small business owners (64%) support—will not have the financial resources it needs to get up and running¹. For many of the small business owners I work with, the PFML program will not only provide an opportunity to compete in a competitive job market, but it will also ensure their employees are secure in their ability to take care of their families both financially and physically.

As we begin to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, we are entering a difficult hiring market. Small business owners who cannot afford to provide their employees with a competitive benefits package are at a disadvantage. A state-run paid leave program will start to level that playing field, allowing small business owners more of an advantage in the job market.

However, paid leave is not only an economic issue for small business owners who consider their employees to be a part of their family. Business owners want to give their employees the time needed to take care of a loved one, but the financial burden of paying out-of-pocket for an employee who is not working is simply too great for many entrepreneurs to afford. The PFML program would allow employees to continue getting paid during this time at little expense to the business owner.

Finally, starting a small business is a huge risk. Knowing that you have the PFML program to fall back on in the event that you want to start or grow your family or need to take time to take care of an ill loved one lessens the risk factors.

Small businesses are the heart of our economy and the soul of our communities. The state-run PFML program would not only support the small businesses that exist today, but also make entrepreneurship more accessible, especially to young people and women who are more likely to take on the additional responsibilities of caregiving. I strongly encourage you to support SB21-251 and support Colorado's small businesses.

¹ Small Business Majority, March 2019, "Colorado small businesses support paid family medical leave."
<https://smallbusinessmajority.org/our-research/workforce/colorado-small-businesses-support-paid-family-medical-leave>

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today about this issue.

Sincerely,

Lindsey Vigoda