



## **SB19-188 - FAMILI Family Medical Leave Insurance Program**

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### TESTIMONY

Thank you, Senators Winter and Williams, we commend you for thoughtfully exploring the best means for helping ensure that working people can take paid family and medical leave when a new child arrives, a seriously ill family member needs care or a serious personal injury or illness arises.

As you know, the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce has been in business in Colorado for 152 years. We represent 3000 members and their 300,000 employees. Key to our success has been our commitment and discipline to develop public policy and economic strategies that serve our diverse membership and support the work of our public and non-profit partners.

Our members care deeply about their employees and teams. We know it's our workforce that makes our companies and our region so successful and economically competitive. So, you can imagine that our companies do their best to provide competitive benefits and flexibility to their employees. As a matter of fact, we are hard-pressed to find a single member that doesn't provide some paid leave for their employees. We know that a number of our employers actually provide far richer benefits for their employees than SB 188 would provide. And with 90 percent of our members having less than 100 employees, their concerns focus on the fact they can't afford to pay for both their current level of benefits in addition to the mandates in SB 188, so benefits for some employees will decrease. Businesses also have concerns about the complications of applying multiple leave programs and are hesitant to sign on to such a costly, one-size-fits all mandate.

We understand that amendments we support, such as a cap on the employer contribution, will be offered later in this hearing and we thank you for your openness and willingness to work with the business stakeholders.

To that end, we have additional concerns about the bill including the lack of alignment with FMLA, the lack of actuarial analysis, the cost of such a program and the scope – which is greater than paid family leave programs in any other state. We would like to continue conversations about these critical concerns from our members.



Washington state reinforces our concerns about the cost and scope of this proposal. Washington passed a less expansive program than what's being proposed in this bill yet it still carried a price tag of \$600 million per year just to pay for the cost of administering the program (additional state employees, office space, and the data infrastructure). This fact caused Washington State to back off implementing their program. Our employers can't imagine risking the leave their employees deserve to be able to count on.

In the end, our request has been simple — allow employers to opt out if they currently provide paid leave to their employees – particularly considering those that provide a richer benefit. Let's incent employers to do more, rather than mandate a one-size-fits-all approach that punishes those that have already taken steps to provide leave to their employees. Colorado's employees deserve to have confidence that their family medical leave will be there when they need it.