

To: Chair Sirotkin and the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs

My name is Claire Georges, and I own Butterfly Bakery in Montpelier. We've been in business for 14 years and I currently have four employees. And we are growing!

As a small business owner and a mother of two young children, I recognize the importance of providing good jobs that offer great compensation and benefits. I want to own the kind of company that I would want to work for and buy from.

As a small employer, I do everything I can to provide good jobs, understanding not only the positive impact of that on my employees themselves, but on my business and the overall economy in Vermont.

That being said, It can be incredibly difficult to provide my employees with all the benefits they need - and to compete with larger employers that often can. Most small business owners could never provide the necessary amount of paid family and medical leave to their employees - no matter how much they'd like to. We need to address this challenge with smart policy that reflects the reality of the business landscape in Vermont and allows small businesses to thrive.

That's why I support the creation of a family leave insurance program.

I supported the bill as introduced and I support it as currently drafted as well - though I hope the committee will consider reinstating leave time for personal illness or injury, allowing self-employed to obtain coverage, and extending the length of leave allowed.

Vermont is proud of being a small-business state. We will likely always be a small-business state, and I see that as a strength. But it also comes with challenges in how we think about the nature of employment. Creating benefit structures that are universal and portable will not only help support the workforce, but small businesses and entrepreneurs as they start and grow their businesses.

A statewide pooled insurance program would eliminate this dilemma for small businesses across the state, and for Vermonters who are trying to decide how to keep their jobs and also raise a family.

Thank you.

Claire Georges
Owner of Butterfly Bakery in Montpelier, VT