

To: Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs
From: Matt Birong, Owner of 3 Squares Cafe in Vergennes

One such proposal moving in Vermont's legislature that would help level the playing field for small businesses is family and medical leave insurance.

I fully supported the bill as introduced. I feel most strongly that the committee consider restoring the personal medical leave component of the program and encourage the committee to consider ensuring self-employed have access to this program as well.

I own a small business, and my modest bottom line doesn't allow me to make choices about whether to provide paid family and medical leave. I am pleased to see the Senate taking up the proposal to create a family and medical leave insurance pool.

Vermont is a small business state, and without smart public policy, like family and medical leave insurance, it is next to impossible for small businesses to compete with larger businesses for employees that are committed and hardworking.

It's no secret that, as a state, we are having difficulties attracting and retaining talented workers. I've had conversations with many people who want to stay or come here to build their lives, but one of the biggest challenges for them is finding a job with generous enough benefits packages to sustain their families.

With 90 percent of Vermont's employers having 20 or fewer employees and many of these businesses operating with razor thin margins, it's impossible for them to offer a benefit like paid family and medical leave on their own. I see the implementation of this program as a vital tool for the cultivation and success of Vermont's future economy.

Thank you,