

Jaquelyn Ziegler Fernandez Rieke - Owner of Nutty Steph's in Middlesex and Onion River Campground in Plainfield

I fully support H.196 and fully supported it as introduced (including the employer/employee joint funding). While I understand it may be challenging for the committee to restore all of the components of the original bill, I strongly encourage the committee consider restoring the personal medical leave and extending the number of weeks allowed to twelve.

New mothers should be able to bond with their babies; we should be encouraging this and promoting the health of Vermont's future generations and new parents. It is absurd that we, as a country, are so far behind the rest of the world.

This is a benefit that I would love to be able to offer to my employees, and while I just can't cover the costs associated with it, **we *would* absolutely be prepared to match a few percents of our employees payroll contribution.** If Vermont implements a statewide insurance plan, it will be an enormous support not just to my staff and my business, but to the entire workforce and all small employers like me across the state who have to compete with bigger businesses for employees.

A family and medical leave insurance program is a support for small business as much as it is for employees. We love paid family leave so much that we put out a Nutty Steph's paid family leave chocolate bar.

Thank you,

Jaquelyn Ziegler Fernandez Rieke