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I am writing on behalf of Backyard, a seasonal business that operates primarily during the months of May to October to express our deep concern regarding the proposed Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) legislation in its current form.

While we fully recognize and support the importance of providing workers with the ability to care for themselves and their families during times of need, a one-size-fits-all mandate poses significant challenges to businesses like ours that are seasonal in nature. Our business model depends heavily on a short window of time during which we employ a temporary but highly essential workforce. The majority of my staff are high school and college aged who do not reap the benefits of such a program.

Our business is a food establishment and the years since Covid, we have seen an increase in food and labor costs as high as 30%. Many establishments are closing their doors and unable to sustain in this economic environment. The financial and operational burdens imposed by a mandatory PFML program — including payroll deductions, administrative overhead, and coverage for absent employees — could severely hinder our ability to remain competitive and sustain operations.

We strongly believe that support for employees and flexibility in the workplace can and should be encouraged. However, mandating participation in such a program without regard for the seasonal realities of certain industries fails to account for the diverse economic landscape of our state.

Instead, we urge policymakers to consider a voluntary opt-in framework for PFML programs. This would allow businesses that are able and willing to participate the opportunity to do so, while granting seasonal and small businesses the flexibility to assess and determine what works best for their unique situations. A voluntary model ensures employee support programs can expand without placing disproportionate burdens on businesses that are already operating on tight margins and fluctuating schedules.

We respectfully request that lawmakers reconsider the structure of this legislation to better support the broad spectrum of businesses it affects — including those like ours that provide vital seasonal employment and contribute meaningfully to the local economy.

Thank you for your time and consideration.