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**Contact: Laura Paskin**

Days: 206-529-6360

Eves: 206-526-8636

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **House and Senate Bills Designed to Balance Work and Family Responsibilities**

Olympia—Senator Karen Keiser and Representative Mary Lou Dickerson have submitted companion bills, Senate Bill 5069 and House Bill 1173, to provide paid leave benefits to workers who must take time off to care for their families.

These bills provide for up to five weeks of paid leave and job protection for workers who need to care for a new baby, sick family member or their own illnesses. Payments of \$250 per week would enable families to stave off a financial crisis while welcoming a new child into the family or dealing with a medical situation. Funding would come from a one-cent per hour premium paid by both workers and employers (2 cents total), approximately \$20 per year for each.

This legislation builds on the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, which allows up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for a new child or when a medical situation arises for individuals in large companies or public employers.

“What has been missing all along has been the ability of parents to care for their children, spouse, or parents while not being forced to quit their jobs, go on welfare, or face a financial crisis. This legislation is an insurance policy for working families and their employers,” said Senator Karen Keiser.

Studies have shown that businesses and workers both benefit from paid family leave. Employees who come to work sick and distracted cost businesses \$180 billion annually in lost productivity. With paid family leave, turnover and absenteeism go down as does the risk of spreading disease in the workers. Training and recruitment costs alone average \$12,000 to replace a nonprofessional worker and \$35,000 to replace a professional worker.

For workers who need to take time off to care for a newborn child, their own illness, or a sick family member, the consequences are often severe: they lose their incomes while away from work and threaten the financial security of their families; they lose their jobs; they have an older child miss school to take care of a younger child; or they leave a sick child or ailing parent home alone.

“We know that the first weeks of a child’s life are critically important,” said Representative Mary Lou Dickerson. “We know as well that children do better when a parent can stay with them when they are seriously ill. People shouldn’t be forced to choose between their families and their incomes. If we’re serious about strengthening families, this legislation is the next step.”

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**Family Leave Coalition**

c/o Economic Opportunity Institute

1900 N. Northlake Way, Suite 237, Seattle, WA 98103 | (206) 633-6580 | fax (206) 633-6665 | [www.EOonline.org](http://www.EOonline.org)