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To whom it may concern:

The purpose of this communication is to publicly express our **whole-hearted support for immediate implementation of the 12-week paid parental leave policy** put forth by the Paid Parental Leave Policy Athena Working Group and Faculty Senate Sub-Committee. As outlined in this group's "white paper" on this initiative, there are myriad evidence-based reasons why this policy represents the right thing to do.

First and foremost, paid parental leave is associated with improved acute and long-term child health and wellbeing, such as reduced neonatal hospitalizations for avoidable infections and illnesses (Pihl and Basso, 2019); reduced prevalence of overweight, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), hearing-related problems in elementary school-aged children (Lichtman-Sadot and Pillay Bell, 2017); and better infant-mother attachment and interactions (Plotka and Busch-Rossnagel, 2018). Paid family leave has also been associated with improved mothers' labor market outcomes; attenuation of women exiting the workforce; and higher earning potential for women (Byker, 2016; Baum and Ruhm, 2016; Rossin-Slater et al., 2013; Bana et al., 2018). In addition to direct benefits on infants and mothers, paid parental leave also has far-reaching impacts on sibling health outcomes (Beuchert et al., 2016) and marital stability (Avdic and Karimi, 2018). These effects are even more evident among minority groups such as Latinx, Black, Indigenous and Pacific Islanders (Narula, 2020; Mason and Acosta, 2021), making the provision of paid parental leave an important contributor to efforts to enhance **inclusion, diversity, and equity**.

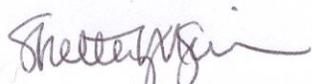
In addition to the inherent health and well-being benefits it has for mothers and infants, offering paid parental leave at the University of Idaho is critical to being able to attract and retain high-quality faculty and staff. We simply cannot compete with the state's peer institutions, all of which offer paid leave. Similarly, State of Idaho employees in the executive branch now receive paid parental leave via the Families First Act signed into law by Governor Brad Little in 2020. Justification for the Families First Act (<https://gov.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/eo-2020-03.pdf>) succinctly and accurately reflects why paid parental leave is simply the right thing to do. This justification is as follows.

1. *Idaho state government employs thousands of Idahoans, many of whom are starting and growing their families with the birth or adoption of children.*
2. *Idaho is a state that encourages and fosters strong families as the bedrock of our society.*
3. *Bonding between parents and children when a child is born or adopted is an essential part of establishing deep connections and meaningful lifelong attachment between parents and children.*
4. *Idaho state government will retain an effective workforce by making it possible for families to spend as much time as possible with newborn or adopted children in the weeks immediately after they come into the family.*
5. *Leaders and managers within Idaho state government should encourage flexibility to the extent possible with mothers and fathers returning to state service after the birth or adoption of a child.*

The overarching **vision of the Margaret Ritchie School of Family and Consumer Sciences is to educate and support people so they can live their best lives**. Our mission is inspired by the principle that happy, healthy, empowered individuals and families are the foundation of a strong society. In line with our

vision and mission, we pledge our commitment to support infants and new parents during one of the most critical periods of their lives. The undersigned faculty and staff of the Margaret Ritchie School of Family and Consumer Sciences vigorously support the proposed 12-week paid parental leave policy primarily because it will strengthen families and support individuals. In addition, it will substantially bolster the University of Idaho's ability to recruit and retain a high-quality workforce.

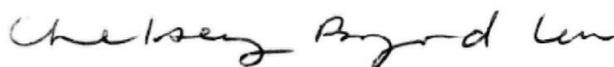
Sincerely,



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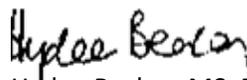
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