



small business voices. small business values.

---

**02.14.2022**

**House Workforce and Business Development Finance and Policy Committee**

**Statement of Lani Basa**

**Owner, Business Women's Circle**

**Minneapolis, MN**

**Main Street Alliance member**

Thank you Chair Noor and members of the committee for the invitation to share my story today. My name is Lani Basa. I own The Business Women's Circle in Minneapolis and I am a member of Main Street Alliance.

I believe deeply in helping women - both entrepreneurs and professionals. My business was created to support women who dream of starting and expanding businesses of their own. At the Business Women's Circle, we've been helping women grow their businesses and themselves through accountability, learning, and peer support. BWC is in its 13th year of business with over 200 current members, and we have mentored and supported approximately 600+ women business owners over the course of that time.

There are many reasons why we see women-owned businesses fold. Over the past 13 years - one of the biggest concerns I continue to hear from both new entrepreneurs and seasoned business owners is paid family and medical leave. I knew a business owner of 18 years who was concerned about taking time off to move her parents - both of whom were impacted by dementia and other health concerns up to Minnesota from Iowa because she could not afford it. I also knew a business owner who returned to work after just 2 weeks of recovery from neck surgery and a young entrepreneur who decided to close her business when she was pregnant so she could return to a corporate job that offered maternity leave.

Since most caregiving roles fall on women, particularly women of color, paid leave is an important gender and racial equity measure for business owners and employees alike.

The state has an important role in promoting economic development and this issue impacts all businesses, especially women-owned businesses. By establishing a paid family and medical leave program, the state can help level the playing field and increase women's participation in the workforce and business ownership.



Most of us will need to provide care at some point in our life -- either to welcome a new baby, care for an aging parent, or for an unexpected health crisis such as cancer. That shouldn't be a financial struggle for any of us, whether we're a business owner or an employee. I urge members of the committee to pass House File 1200 to ensure all Minnesotans have access to paid family medical leave.