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November 6, 2007

Jill Feinmuth, Counsel
House Commerce & Labor Committee
Washington State Legislature
Olympia, WA

Dear Jill:

As a representative of the business community, I was pleased that Paid Family Leave Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Conway asked for our company's opinion about California's approach to opting out of a state Paid Family Leave program. Chairman Conway said whatever we do, we must make the process "simpler and get clarification." He said, "We need a system that's easily understood," and at SEL, we are very concerned that the way California has written its opt-out policy would not be easily understood nor a good working model for the state of Washington.

I met with SEL Senior Vice President Nancy Hindman, who is our financial "guide post," and with SEL Division Human Resource Managers Janet Poitra and Patty Vettrus. We studied each item on the California plan, and I am pleased to report that we completed this task and offer the enclosed comments.

Yesterday, I served on a panel exploring the Paid Family Leave legislation. The Washington Policy Center sponsored its Small Business Conference in Seattle. Without exception, the attendees were very concerned about this bill. I explained that many of the brightest minds in our state working together in Olympia earlier this year could not determine the two most important aspects of the bill – the administration and the funding. A shock wave went through the room when I told them that the Task Force is expected to solve it in five meetings of two hours each.

The opportunities that have opened up to dig deeper into the challenges we face as a Task Force have been encouraging to both Judy Coovert and me, and we are committed to looking at all the possibilities – including private sector answers.

Thank you in advance for sharing SEL's views on California's opt-out program with the other Task Force members.

Sincerely,

Susan Fagan
Director, Public Affairs

cc: Nancy Hindman, Janet Poitra, Patty Vettrus, Shirlene Weeks, Judy Coovert, Kris Teft