

June 6, 2023

To: Ventura County Board of Supervisors
Dr Sevet Johnson, CEO Ventura County

My name is Emily Kroening, I have worked as a Family Physician for Ventura County for 15 years when I began my residency training at VCMC in 2008.

And this is Lily, my daughter, who turns 2 months old today. I am currently on leave from work since she was born in April. We adopted all 3 of our children. With our two older boys, I was able to access the CA Paid Family Leave program through SDI to have 8 weeks of paid bonding time. During that time I was working for Conejo Valley Family Medical Group and had no issues as all employees paid into SDI.

As you have heard from Bryan from UAPD; when we became County employees the SDI benefit was taken away from physicians without our knowledge. When we discovered this, the physicians took immediate action and voted unanimously to have SDI reinstated. We took this vote to Labor Relations because we cannot individually sign up for SDI, it has to be through your employer, (although there is zero cost to the employer). The County initially declined our request, saying SDI isn't necessary because we are provided private disability insurance. But for families like mine, or for non-birthing parents to access paid bonding time, this is the only option.

As you may know, the state of California is a leader in the movement for paid maternity leave and paid family leave. It is a right of the workers in California to be able to pay into this program and access it.

Because of Labor Relations lack of cooperation and insensitivity to this issue it took 13 months for SDI to be reinstated, leaving a large gap in coverage for our unit.

Several physicians have had to take leave without pay around the time of their child's birth. Because of the County's mishandling of this issue, we are asking for paid gap coverage for those of us affected.

I have worked for Ventura County for 15 years and believe in the mission of providing the highest quality of care our most vulnerable citizens. I take pride in my work and caring for our patients. That being said, as a Family Physician who practices Obstetrics, I am in high demand and get daily job offers for other sites in California and nation-wide. I want to stay in Ventura but the lack of benefits and support from my employer has made me consider seeking employment elsewhere.

Respectfully,

Emily Kroening, MD