

Dear Kirsten

I have recently been in contact with Nathan Beddoe regarding our deep concerns of the upcoming family friendly employment rights.

I am a director of a cabinet making business with my husband, and we employ 11 other members of staff.

There are many aspects of this proposal which are very worrying for the small and medium sized businesses who simply do not have the capacity or often the funds to allow this.

We received an inadequate letter from Judy Martin, who has clearly never directed a business, and who in my opinion has not answered our concerns.

The main areas that I have issues with are as follows:

1. Increasing the paid time off to 6 weeks, from the already expensive 2 weeks. In addition to a staff member's holiday of 4 weeks plus 9 bank holidays, this is 3 months paid time off. I have 4 staff members who are in the position of possibly having children in the near future, if all 4 were to need this at the same time, 1/3 of my workforce would be off at our expense. The turnover of our business is purely based on the output each week, with a potential of a third of the staff off, how can we survive?

2. A new member of staff only needs to work for one day for this law to apply to them. This part of the proposal is ridiculous as potential employees could already be pregnant at the time of being awarded a job. I believe the qualifying period should be at least 6 months with an employer.

3. This law discriminates against people who are either unable to have children, or who have chosen not to. It discriminates against same sex couples. In this age of equality, there has never been such inequality in some areas. I'm not however proposing that couples who are unable to have children are also given 6 weeks extra paid holiday

4. It will without doubt create resentment towards those who choose to have multiple children and who therefore have repeated paid time off. We have already experienced this within our company, and that was before the September 2018 legislation was passed

5. Taking a year off in 4 blocks is absurd and unworkable. In theory, a couple could do 3 months on and 3 months off alternating for 2 years, disrupting 2 businesses, by which time, there could be another baby on the way. It is IMPOSSIBLE to find any skilled workers to work for 3 months at a time to fill these gaps, and yet I would have to allow this to happen. I recently advertised for a cabinet maker and received no replies. NONE. Where does Judy Martin propose that I recruit cabinet makers for 3 month blocks? If the law is to be passed, I believe that it should only be taken in ONE block, the length and dates of which must be decided 3 months prior to the birth. The current proposal of 14 days notice is impossible to work with, when your current staff may have holidays already approved.

6. If a member of staff takes the 6 weeks off and then hands his/her notice in, it is unfair on the employer.

7. If the 'blocks' idea was approved, Employees should not be able to transfer the unused blocks to a new employer, if they change jobs during the 3 years. It will cause issues with the new recruitment of staff who have had a baby within the previous years whilst with another employer.

I believe that if a member of staff decides to take a year off, they should need to re-apply for their job, if they have been replaced. How on earth are small businesses (particularly those that employ young women) going to cope with this new legislation that allows people to take time off, as they wish and walk straight back into a job later on, only to be pregnant again and continue this process? Nurseries, beauty salons and hairdressers in particular will suffer greatly. It will, without doubt, be even more

difficult to get work as a young person in these sectors.

I am somewhat lucky, in that most of my staff do not intend to have more children. If I had an entire workforce of young, childless staff, I would be extremely worried about this legislation, and I am of the opinion that passing such legislation will be the death of the small business.

We are not intending recruiting any more staff, the process is becoming too complicated.

I'm not someone who thinks that women should go straight back to work after giving birth, I am all in favour of a mother (or father) bringing up a child. What I am opposing is the fact that this will cost us so heavily financially, with no help from the states, and that the disruption of the unpaid time off taken in blocks is unworkable.

I look forward to hearing from you

Kind Regards

Artizen Kitchens Ltd