

Amy Larkin
Arundel
LD 258

Amy Jane Larkin
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Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Labor and Housing: my name is Amy Larkin and I live in Arundel.

I'm one of Maine's many family caregivers. Five years ago, my husband and I moved in with my grandmother Eva, who had been living alone since my mother passed away. Eva marked her 100th birthday last June and we so enjoyed celebrating her and the incredible life she's lived. Unfortunately, she fell getting ready for bed at 12:15 a.m., just minutes after her birthday officially ended. She had broken her hip and needed surgery and rehabilitation. In our time living together, my grandmother has suffered various ailments and required extra care, like a broken wrist just weeks after I moved in or a series of mini-strokes after a change in medication. But nothing had prepared me for the time she would need from me last summer. She stayed at an acute rehab hospital in Portland for 12 days where she learned to use a walker and move around on her healing hip. After that, she needed my help with everything. I had to be there anytime she moved around the house, watching her and making sure she used her walker correctly. I applied ice packs, administered new pain medication, set her up with extra pillows in bed to keep her leg elevated, and led her through her exercises on the 5 days a week we didn't see her physical therapist. Due to the staffing shortage, we weren't able to access a CNA provided by Medicare, who would have assisted with bathing and dressing. So, I learned from her occupational therapist and took these things on as well.

The first month was a total blur and either my husband or I had to be home at all times. By mid-September, two and half months later, Eva was able to do most everything by herself thanks to a lot of hard work and determination. I am so fortunate that I work for myself so I didn't have to ask for that time off. I'm an illustrator and it's flexible work, but those were missed hours which means very little income and clients lost. Caregiving isn't easy work, and it's devastating to know you might struggle to pay your own health insurance while focusing on the wellbeing of someone you love.

It's my honor to care for my grandmother the way she helped care for me as a child. But it doesn't have to be this hard. Like me, the majority of Mainers don't have access to any extended paid leave benefits that allow them to care for themselves or loved ones when something big comes up. Something big ALWAYS comes up, for each and every one of us. I urge you to set aside funds in the budget to cover the necessary start-up costs to make paid leave a reality for all Maine workers and their loved ones. Thank you so much for your time.