

February 10, 2023

Testimony in support of Paid Family Medical Leave. LD258

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs.

My name is Dr. Erica Magnus and I live in Windham. For almost a decade, I was a family caregiver for my mother in the home I share with my wife.

I am writing neither in support of nor in opposition to LD 258. Please consider allocating the startup funding for Paid Family Medical Leave in LD 258: *An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025.*

We all know that life can be quite tumultuous at times. Anything can happen and at those moments our loved ones help us get through. This is especially true for family caregivers; individuals who help their loved ones with everyday tasks or even with complex medical assistance. Every day, millions of Americans just like me help their parents, spouses and other loved ones live independently at home — where they want to be.

My mother was adamant about staying at home and I would not have had it any other way. When caregiving tasks became more and more intense as my mother aged, we learned to do things we never thought we would do! We learned how to safely change bed linens with someone still in the bed. We administered medications and learned how to safely transition my mother from her bed, to a chair, to a toilet and back again.

As is the case with many caregivers in Maine, at the same time my mother started to need care at home, I was working part-time as a university professor. Ultimately, I made the decision to stop working because I simply could not manage both jobs – teaching and caregiving – at the same time. Something had to give. Although I gladly took on my role as a caregiver, I had worked hard to earn my Ph.D. and was saddened to put my career on hold. This situation put a lot of pressure on me, as well as on my family, but my wife and I agreed it was the necessary step to take.

We didn't realize then the long-term financial toll my time out of the workforce would take.

I urge you to support a Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML) program for Maine by allocating the startup funding for this crucial program. PFML allows for prolonged absences from work that can be used in a variety of situations, without sacrificing one's livelihood. Had this program been in place when I was caregiving, it would have been a welcome lifeline for me and would have enabled me to keep my job.

Erica Magnus
AARP Maine Volunteer Advocate