



Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs: my name is Adam Zuckerman and I am the lobbyist for the Maine People's Alliance.

MPA is Maine's largest community action organization with over 32,000 members across the state. Our mission is to create a world where everyone has what they need, contributes what they can, and no one is left behind.

I am here today to testify neither for nor against LD 258 and urge the committee to invest in the startup cost for Paid Family Medical Leave.

Before I became a lobbyist I spent a few years directing the Maine Small Business Coalition, a group of over 3,000 small business owners across the state. The business owners I worked with didn't found their businesses to get rich. They did it to pursue their dream, to create something special, and to invest in their community.

But what I heard time and time again was that they felt like the deck was stacked against them. One of their biggest challenges was workforce recruitment and retention. They struggled to compete against big corporations with economies of scale that could offer policies like Paid Family & Medical Leave. And the numbers bear it out. Over twice as many big firms offer paid leave. According to a Deloitte survey, 77% of workers said that if a firm offered paid leave had bearing on where they decided to work. Half said they'd rather have more paid leave than a pay raise.<sup>1</sup>

And it makes sense. Life happens. Last year I was in a bike accident and suffered a traumatic brain injury. I am so grateful that I was able to take time off to recover. However, countless Mainers, especially small business owners and their employees, don't have that option.

This legislature has the opportunity to level the playing field for small businesses and the workers they employ by investing \$40 million in one-time start-up costs for Paid Family and Medical Leave. It is a crucial investment that will launch a self-sustaining program that helps level the playing field.

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<sup>1</sup> "Parental Leave Survey." Deloitte. 2016.

<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/about-deloitte/us-about-deloitte-parental-leave-survey.pdf>

Valuing working people and our small businesses creates a positive feedback loop that fosters the strong, rooted, regenerative, local economies and communities that make Maine a great place to live. It is a crucial investment in our small businesses and our communities that I hope this committee will support.

Thank you for your time.