

**Testimony In Support of LD 1964, An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the  
Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program**

Katy Cowles  
South Portland, ME  
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Dear Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing,

My name is Katy Cowles and I live in South Portland. I am writing today in support of paid family and medical leave for Maine.

I feel strongly that women need the option to take paid leave during pregnancy and after the birth or adoption of a child to adjust both physically and mentally to this major life event. For most women, becoming a mother is a joyful experience, but it is also stressful and requires a significant amount of time and energy to adjust and get your feet under you. This is the case when things go well, and even more critical when there are issues. Having fear about losing your job, being unable to pay bills, or returning to work before you are prepared can affect the entire family in profoundly negative ways.

When I was 33 years old, married, employed, and supporting my husband in graduate school, I got pregnant. I was excited as this was a wanted pregnancy. I had every expectation that my pregnancy would go well and I would continue to support my family, take some time off and return to work without skipping a beat. This is not how things turned out. I had a complicated pregnancy that required me to be on bed rest for 10 weeks. This was unexpected, but so many of life's struggles are unexpected. I was fortunate enough to have access to long term disability prior to giving birth and 6 weeks of short term disability through my employer after giving birth, but this reimbursement was only 50% of my salary. Even with a safety net, this was difficult. I can't imagine how we would have fared without some savings and family support. Many families don't have these safety nets and this situation could start a downward spiral that would be nearly impossible to recover from.

My husband and I adopted our second two children as I could not risk another pregnancy. This path had it's own set of joys and challenges. The biggest challenge was that neither of us had paid leave after the adoption. Both of our children spent the first year of their life in an orphanage and really needed time to bond with us after the adoption. It was difficult, but we were able to take time off unpaid knowing we would have jobs to return to. I can't imagine how difficult it would have been if we had to choose between the well being of our newly adopted children and our financial security. This is a choice families should not have to make.

If this law passed, the fear and uncertainty that many families face after the birth or adoption of a child would be greatly reduced. Families could enjoy those precious early weeks with a new child knowing they are doing what is right for their child while remaining financially secure with a job to return to.

We hope you will support LD 1964. Thank you for listening, I'm happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Katy Cowles