

Testimony in support of paid family leave – LD 1964

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Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing,

I always knew it was a major shortcoming of the United States that we lack paid family leave, particularly when it comes to having a baby. It wasn't until I had my son Samuel in June of 2021 that the true magnitude of this policy failure became real to me.

No parent should have to leave their weeks old newborn at a daycare so they can go back to work. No recovering birthing parent should have to go back to work while they still should be physically recovering from the incredibly difficult experience of giving birth.

I had to spend 12 days in the hospital after Sam was born, and had three surgeries due to complications from giving birth. I didn't even walk in the door home until my first two weeks of my leave were used, just at the hospital. For parents or babies who have medical complications, which is more common than one may think, this time home is absolutely necessary.

Newborns should be at home with their parents. This is crucial for breastfeeding (if the family chooses to do so.) It's crucial for the recovery from birth. It's crucial for bonding. It's crucial for getting enough rest to function.

Most countries have months, if not a year or more, that a parent can stay home with a new baby, at either full or partial wages. It is downright shameful that the US lacks paid family leave. This bill is a big step in the right direction. It is so significant for families who desperately need it.

This also would help the childcare crisis. The fewer spots that are needed for newborns will allow for more space for older children in childcare.

It is abjectly cruel to separate a parent from their newborn because the parent cannot afford to lose their income.

I do think the leave program should be administered publicly, not privately, and I ask you to amend the bill to change that aspect of the program.

It also should apply to all employees, including those who work for small businesses. People who work at small businesses have families too.

Thank you for your consideration. As a new mother, I can think of few things that are more important to helping Maine families than passing paid family leave now.