

Sarah Perle  
Topsham  
LD 1964

Please accept the following as my testimony for LD 1964.

As a mother of a 9 month old baby, I am very fortunate to have the means to provide our family with the leave that we were able to afford. As a public school teacher in Maine, I received 8 weeks of paid leave with an option for 4 more weeks unpaid but with the same health insurance coverage paid by the district. I elected to take an additional two months of child care leave that was unpaid and without my employer covering their portion of my health insurance, which was a big cost. My husband was then able to take 12 weeks of leave at reduced pay (with health insurance paid by his employer) because he works out of Massachusetts. With an additional two weeks of unpaid child care leave for me, we were able to make it to May 2023 when we finally found a daycare spot. The lack of child care availability is extremely challenging, which affects families in so many ways.

Child care is just one of the many issues related to this bill though.

I am 40 years old and struggled to have a baby. I was so excited when I got pregnant and I feel so grateful that my baby is here and healthy. Despite all of that, I was diagnosed with postpartum anxiety and depression, which was a shock to me. If I hadn't been able to take the time off that I did, I fear that I would not have been able to receive the care that I needed.

Having a baby is a huge transition for the birthing parent and whoever else is in the family. Our society does not support families in the ways that it needs to, which in turn, has an effect on the baby and the baby's future. We need to do better in providing support for families with newborns. At a very minimum, every parent (birthing or not) should be given 12 weeks of paid leave.

Thank you for your time.