

John Russell  
Portland  
LD 1964

Dear Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and distinguished Members of the Committee,

My name is John Russell, and I am an owner of The Merchant Company on Congress Street in Portland, Maine. I request you vote to support LD 1964, An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program.

My business, the Merchant Company, has been in business since 2011. Our consignment shop is filled with the work of hundreds of local artists. Like our fellow small businesses, we're a vital thread in the tapestry of our local economy.

I am calling on you to pass LD 1964 to provide small business owners like me and employees with much-needed financial security to deal with major life events without jeopardizing our livelihoods. As a small business owner, I do not currently have access to paid family and medical leave. Since we're all human beings who can get sick or hurt, any of us could need the safety net that paid leave provides.

While I am relieved that the bill exempts employers of less than 15 employees from paying the employer contribution, I do not support an exemption for small businesses relating to retaliation or job protection. If employees of small businesses can't take leave without the fear of retaliation or losing their jobs, they cannot access the program. I urge you to make sure that no one faces retaliation or job loss for taking leave that they need and deserve.

I also believe this program should be a public insurance plan administered by our government. Privatization often leads to higher costs and worse services while a big insurance company makes a profit.

Please vote to support LD 1964 to provide paid family and medical leave for all Mainers!

Sincerely,

John Russell  
Portland, ME