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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

Jane Doe (Name)
Anytown, Maine (Town, State)
May 25, 2023

Dear Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing,

My name is **XXXXXX** and I live in **XXXXX**. I am testifying in support of paid family and medical leave for Maine.

Heart (what we feel) Share your personal connection or story related to the issue.

Head (what we think) Share a connection to the broader issue, trends, or facts (be short - you don't need to do research!

Hands (what we do) Directly connect your personal story to the policy. What would be different for you and others if this law passed?

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

Sincerely,

Your Name Here

Jill Barkley Roy
South Portland
LD 1964

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

Jill Barkley Roy
South Portland, Maine
May 25, 2023

Dear Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing,

My name is Jill Barkley Roy and I live in South Portland. I am testifying in support of paid family and medical leave for Maine.

On a Wednesday in October in 2021, my wife came home for lunch and casually asked “what would happen if we got ‘the call’ today?” And I replied, “I think we could say ‘yes’”. Later that night, I’d pick up the phone to a caseworker from the Department of Health and Human Services on the other line, asking if we were ready for our first placement. An hour later, Amy and I said yes. The next morning, we were first time foster moms to a newborn.

For me, because of my employer’s paid family leave policy, I called my boss after we said yes that night almost two years ago. I didn’t think twice about what she would say or how my colleagues would adjust to this sudden life change for me and my family. As a foster parent, I was included in our fully paid twelve week leave policy and knew that would come with a tremendous amount of flexibility as a new working mom.

As it turns out, I needed that time off to care for a newborn who remained hospitalized for the first two weeks we were her guardians - and I’ve needed that flexibility to be able to juggle parenting and all the additional appointments foster care can bring! However, I know that a lot of my fellow foster parents have neither the paid time off or flexible and supportive work environment I do. At best, this creates additional challenges for them to truly meet the needs of the child or children in their care - at worst, it can prevent them from agreeing to welcome a child or children into their homes in the first place.

The number of foster parents in Maine is growing – according to the Casey Foundation, there are almost 800 more kids in Maine’s foster care system now than there were in 2017, bringing the total number of children in foster care to over 2,300. In a state where there are not enough foster homes available to meet the need, we must do what we can to support foster parents so that these kids can have the best care possible.

We have a unique opportunity to bring foster parents a long-lasting gift: a strong Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) program.

PFML guarantees time for employed foster parents to bond with a foster child who was placed in the past year or when beginning a formal kinship care arrangement – when the child is placed with a family relative.

This time is crucial in helping foster kids develop and maintain positive beliefs about themselves, which serve as protective factors later in life. All of us want kids to be and feel safe, cared for, and loved. The foster care system can help to accomplish this for many children, by providing a safe haven while biological parents work toward reunification or by providing permanency through adoption when deemed necessary.

Any parent welcoming a new child into their home should be able to solely focus on that child and have time to fully adjust to such a huge transition. Paid family and medical leave gives Maine people the time, flexibility and security to manage life's biggest events without jeopardizing our families' financial stability, employment, or health insurance. It allows foster families like mine to keep saying yes.

I hope you will support LD 1964.

Sincerely,

Jill Barkley Roy