

**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**

Melissa Caminiti
South Portland, Maine 04106

May 25, 2023

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

My name is Melissa Caminiti and I live in South Portland. I am testifying in support of paid family and medical leave for Maine (LD 1964).

I work full-time, and am lucky enough to have a job that allows me to buy into short term disability coverage. This coverage pays a fraction of my full weekly pay, but does none-the-less allow me to have some income if I were to be out of work for an extended period. Recently I experienced an injury that required surgical repair and kept me out of work for several weeks. Had I not had a flexible job that allowed me to work remotely, I would have missed additional work due to my limited mobility.

If this situation had happened at a different point in my life, the results would have been devastating. I was a single mother for most of my son's life and during that period I often worked multiple jobs, and if I needed an extended period away from work, I would not have received any pay. If I lost my job and/or lost my income, even if temporarily, it would have impacted my ability to pay my utilities, rent, healthcare, childcare and car payments. While I was a single mother, I also didn't have health insurance, so I would delay going to the doctor. This kind of situation often leads to people being much sicker and needing more extensive interventions once a health issue rises to a level that a healthcare provider must be seen. These interventions are likely to come with a need to miss work and therefore lose income. If this law passed, these types of situations would hopefully occur less often.

My son is in his twenties now and he and his wife are currently in positions where this is also true—without the support of paid family leave, any health-related setback could cause a domino effect of resource disasters that could hinder their ability to sustain independence. With the passage of this law, they would most likely be able to sustain their employment and continue to contribute to their own lives and community in a way that feels more productive than if they were struggling to find new jobs or find a place to live.

In my work I engage with under-resourced individuals, many of whom are entering the workforce after extended periods of incarceration and often with a history of substance use disorder. They have no safety net, and they aren't often in a position to access or pay for short term disability coverage. Without these supports, and a way to continue

receiving income, a person could easily end up losing whatever tentative housing they may have secured if struck by an injury, illness, or unavoidable caregiving circumstances. Additionally, those with substance use disorders often participate in frequent healthcare provider appointments and required counseling sessions – both of which commonly occur during day-time work hours and require brief absences from work. If this law passed, the at-risk individuals I work with would have a better chance at keeping a job and therefore keeping housing, etc. These items often make a critical difference between homelessness, sustained recovery from substance use disorders, and also reduced recidivism.

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

Sincerely,

Melissa J. Caminiti

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South Portland
LD 1964

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