



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Members of the Joint Committee on Labor and Housing
From: Jacob Stern
Date: Thursday, May 25, 2023
Re: **Testimony in Support of L.D. 1964: *An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program***

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and Member of the Joint Committee on Labor and Housing,

I am submitting the following testimony on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nation-wide as we work towards combating climate change, promoting a just and sustainable economy, and a healthy environment for all. To that end, we urge an "ought to pass" report on L.D. 1964: *An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program*.

As Sierra Club, we are committed to advocating for our natural environment, public health, and a robust renewable economy. Often, humans are seen as separate from our natural world, but we believe that any vision for the future must include human well-being. As we continue to transition to a renewable economy, we believe it is essential that all workers are treated with dignity and respect¹ (see citation for more information about Sierra Club's labor and economic justice program).

Providing paid leave benefits will allow individuals critical flexibility to take care of children, loved ones, and their own health. This flexibility will in turn create essential opportunities for workers to stay in their jobs and continue to be productive, contributing to our economy and making our state stronger and healthier. According to a 2014 study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research:

¹ Sierra Club. About our Labor and Economic Justice Program. <https://www.sierraclub.org/labor/about>.

"Research shows that paid leave increases the likelihood that workers will return to work after childbirth, improves employee morale, has no or positive effects on workplace productivity, reduces costs to employers through improved employee retention, and improves family incomes. Research further suggests that expanding paid leave is likely to have economy-wide benefits such as reduced government spending on public assistance and increased labor force participation, which would bring concomitant economic gains, generating a larger tax base and increased consumer spending."²

Maine is the only state in New England to not have a paid leave policy and it's past time to pass legislation that benefits families, workers, and business alike.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,
Jacob Stern

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Volunteer Vice Chair
Sierra Club Maine Chapter

² Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. "Asthma Disparities in America." August 2020. p. 40.
<https://www.aafa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/asthma-disparities-in-america-burden-on-racial-ethnic-minorities.pdf>.
<https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/B334-Paid-Parental-Leave-in-the-United-States.pdf>.