

Margo Simmons  
Falmouth  
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

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

My name is Margo Simmons and I live in Falmouth . I am testifying in support of paid family and medical leave for Maine.

I am a woman in my 80s, grateful to have provided love and care to my own family for many decades. However, I can attest that the demands of caregiving sometimes came at considerable costs.

I gave birth to my first child in 1967, a full decade before the Pregnancy Discrimination Act was passed. The cultural presumption was that I would happily stay home with my babies. However, I was college educated, which was rare for women at the time. I knew I could provide more to children in my community through teaching and ultimately opened a childcare center, but found the demands of full-time work and primary caregiving for small children untenable and returned to family caregiving for several more years. In this decade I watched many friends get divorced. It became very clear that the economic arrangement of a single breadwinner is dangerous for women and children and outdated in every way.

When my youngest daughter entered junior high school, I committed to opening another business- this time, an educational toy store and teacher supply company. Despite continued primary caregiving responsibilities, I was able to employ several people for 15 years. In the late 1990s my brother became seriously ill, my parents needed more support, and I was expecting my first grandchild. These events were both sad and joyful and intensely consuming, although temporary , I was glad to bring my attention to those I love, but extremely sorry that it resulted in the closing of my business. More support for interim solutions would have potentially allowed me time to make a different transition to eventual retirement.

Despite the advances my generation made, in terms of women's rights and new opportunities to be in the workforce, I watched my daughter, become a mother without any additional public policy support than I had. My granddaughters are now young adults, and I don't see how they will achieve their own career aspirations and also become mothers. Being a grandmother has been an extraordinary joy for me and I hate to think my own daughter will miss this chance. I sincerely hope that Maine will be a leader and maintain women's right to abortion and women's rights to have children without risking their whole financial future.

As I age, my friends, and I care for ourselves, and our spouses and each other. However, we also rely on our younger family members from time to time. We also sometimes need to hire caregivers and want to pay them a fair wage, but often cannot afford to offer benefits like paid leave to them. While we wish to always be entirely independent and self-reliant , we are interdependent and Will experience events that require some love and care from others. This should not threaten the future careers or financial well-being of our children and their families.

It is exhausting to think of all the billions of hours women spend in the other 40 hours a week of unpaid "work" mostly considered to be "women's work" that has hardly changed in my 80+ years on earth. It is time to make more progress for Maine. I fully support LD 1964 and hope you will too!