

Hannah Lord
Portland
LD 1964

Senator Breen, Representative Pierce and Members of the Appropriations and Financials Affairs Committee; and Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester, and Members of the Labor and Housing Committee,

My name is Hannah Lord. I am writing to share my support of LD 1964. I am a resident of Portland, a single mother and a small business owner of Peony Doula Co., LLC. My business is as a full spectrum doula meaning I support clients through pregnancy loss, fertility treatments, pregnancy, birth and postpartum.

I am also a certified lactation counselor supporting families through exploring all the ways to ensure an infant is healthy and fed. Improving breastfeeding/chestfeeding rates through policies such as Paid Family Leave should be a public health priority. The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding states specific steps people can take to support parents and babies who are breastfeeding/chestfeeding. Action Thirteen is to work toward establishing paid maternity leave for all employed mothers. Their reasoning around how unpaid leave is not enough or equitable for all Americans,

Unpaid leave is usually not an option for lower-income mothers, who are disproportionately women of color. Therefore, paid leave is necessary to reduce the differential effect of employment on breastfeeding among disadvantaged racial, ethnic, and economic groups, which in turn would allow disadvantaged populations to benefit from the health effects of breastfeeding (Surgeon General's Call to Action).

I support new parents through some of the most intimate moments of their life. I have witnessed the benefits of Paid Family Medical Leave for my clients who have access. I have also seen the impact on clients who lacked Paid Family Medical Leave. Many of them within marginalized communities such as single parents or BIPOC parents. According to Andres, single and black mothers are significantly less likely to take the unpaid leave they qualify for after having a baby. Single or low-income mothers simply may not be able to afford to take the time off. High-income or married mothers are more likely to have the ability to access family medical leave by taking unpaid time away from work if they are able to benefit from their partner's income. (Andres, 36). In countries where maternity leave is paid, there is a reduction in poverty among single parents (Plotka et al., 183).

Access to Paid Family Medical Leave should be accessible to all Maine families. According to Andres, families who have access to Paid Family Leave are shown to have infants with higher and healthier birth weights. There is a decrease in premature birth and infant mortality for married, highly educated women. There are health disparities among infants whose low-income families do not have the benefit of Paid Family Medical Leave (Andres, 42). Infants whose families are below the poverty line are thirty percent less likely to receive the vaccines needed between ages 19-35 months (Foster, N). It is a public health issue that parents who need to return to work earlier are less likely to be up-to-date with their infant's immunizations (Andres, 41). This may be because infants whose parents return to work sooner than twelve weeks are more likely to miss regular medical checkups in the first year of their infant's life which can lead to health and developmental problems (Sholar, 91).

Marginalized communities are at higher risk of Postpartum Mood Disorders. According to Postpartum Support International, single mothers are twice as likely to experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress compared to married parents. On average 31% of Black mothers suffer from postpartum depression and 17-59% of Hispanic mothers experience postpartum depressive symptoms. Native American and Alaska Native women experience a rate of postpartum mood disorders of 14-29.7% while Asian women 4.6%. (Christopher-Holloway, Kristy, et al.). Low-income gestational parents are at higher risk for postpartum depression (Newkirk et al., 770). According to Chatterji and Markowitz's research on maternal health, returning to work later is associated with a five to six percent reduction in depressive symptoms

(Chatterji and Markowitz, 23). Length of leave that is less than six weeks is associated with a higher risk of depression impacting marital issues (Andres, 42). Thank you so much for your time. I hope to see Paid Family Medical Leave become a reality for families in Maine. As you can see the benefits greatly will impact the clients I serve. This bill also greatly benefits other single parents such as myself. .

Works Cited:

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