

To: Members of the Joint Committee on Labor and Housing  
From: Madelyn Herzog  
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 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*

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

My name is Madelyn Herzog. I am a resident of Pownal and am currently employed as a school social worker at Geiger Elementary School in Lewiston. I am writing today to urge an 'ought to pass' report on L.D. 1964.

This issue is deeply personal to me as my partner and I are currently considering starting a family. Although we are both fully prepared to take on the challenges of parenthood, logistical and financial concerns have been a consistent barrier. As a public employee, I am guaranteed leave through the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), but my partner, who is about to transition away from his current job, has no such guarantee. Without a paid family leave in Maine, he will be restricted as to what types of opportunities he is able to pursue, knowing that he will need to find an employment opportunity that allows him sufficient time off to ensure our future child is adequately cared for. This inflexibility limits our financial opportunities, as I'm sure it does for thousands more across Maine.

Although we are lucky to have strong family support, my parents are aging and my partner's remaining parent has had long-term health issues. I do not know if my partner or I will need to step up in the future to take care of our family members, but a strong paid family leave policy would allow us additional stability even in the worst case scenarios.

Beyond the personal impact this legislation would have on my life, my professional experience has led me to firmly believe that guaranteed paid family leave would have an enormous net positive impact on our society. As a social worker, I work primarily with students aged 5-12 and have witnessed firsthand the impact that strong attachment bonds can have on a young person's life. The bond between a child and a parent or caregiver in the initial months can be hugely impactful in determining that child's future educational, health, and emotional outcomes.<sup>1</sup> According to a recent study, there is a "positive and long-term influence of bonding

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<sup>1</sup> Winston R, Chicot R. The importance of early bonding on the long-term mental health and resilience of children. London J Prim Care (Abingdon). 2016 Feb 24.

on social skills” and “further evidence of the importance of parent child bonding for child development in general.”<sup>2</sup>

Ensuring that parents are able to spend adequate time nurturing their children won't just create less stress, it will have a broader holistic impact on future generations.

Again, I urge a vote in favor of L.D. 1964.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Madelyn Herzog

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<sup>2</sup> Joas J, Möhler E. Maternal Bonding in Early Infancy Predicts Childrens' Social Competences in Preschool Age. Front Psychiatry. 2021 Aug 19.