

Leah Deragon
Portland
LD 1964

LEAH DERAGON
PORTLAND, ME
May 25, 2023

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

My name is LEAH DERAGON and I live in PORTLAND, ME I am testifying in support of paid family and medical leave for Maine.

To put my testimony in context, I am speaking not only as the working mother of two children but as the co-founder of Birth Roots, a non-profit that has been serving prenatal and postnatal families from 11 out of 16 Maine counties for the last 20 years. I testify today as a community leader in the service of perinatal health for two decades. I have personally supported three to four thousand local families and in my role I spend no less than 18 hours with these families helping them prepare for childbirth in the third trimester and adjust to their new role in the 4th trimester. I have easily logged 5000 hours helping new and expectant parents figure out the first 12 weeks of new parenthood. So I testify today not on my own behalf but as a voice of thousands.

It goes without saying that we live in a time of stacked crises, cultural comorbidities one might even say. Look around, we are not well. Maine is not an exception to the national trends of both a maternal mortality crisis and a perinatal mental health crisis. Every day in every county in Maine we are suffering under and struggling with both a childcare crisis and a protracted workforce crisis. Families are buckling under our inaction and stalled policies. I cannot think of a single piece of legislation that is as well researched, demonstrated, desired, or has the power to reverse our trending rates of maternal mortality or perinatal mental health crisis, as well as respond meaningfully to both the childcare crisis and the workforce crisis. ALL OF THIS for less than 1% of wages - shared equally between employer and employee. This legislation is a deal. Alternate solutions to these 4 escalating crises will cost us so much more, as will our inaction.

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

Sincerely,

LEAH DERAGON