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LD 1964

Thank you for considering my testimony.

I am a resident of Saco, 40 years old, with a husband and two children, currently ages 8 and 3.

I will share my experience with my second child who was born April 5, 2020.

By April 24, I had become so tired that I stayed in bed all day. My husband cooked all the meals and took care of our son. If he had been at work, I would not have been able to take care of my children adequately. I was sleeping in 3-4 hour stretches at night, waking up for 30-60 minutes to breastfeed my infant daughter. Some nights I would only get 2 stretches of sleep so napping during the day with my baby was imperative.

Many days during the first 3 months postpartum I was crying, anxious and lethargic. I was exhausted and struggling with breastfeeding. Since my husband was home with us, he was able to comfort and support me as well as make all of our food and meet the needs of our older son. At least 50% of the mornings I woke up so tired and defeated that I was crying.

During this time my body was also still healing. I had stitches to close a tear from birthing which meant that I needed to limit my activities - only going up and down stairs once a day for the first few weeks, no heavy lifting and no walking farther than our yard.

By early June (2 months postpartum) I was feeling a lot of irritability and anxiety. Unfortunately I was often taking this out on my older son, becoming very angry and yelling when the situation did not warrant this behavior. My husband's presence at home allowed me to take breaks, get more rest, and talk through my experiences with him. He was also able to spend a lot of quality time with our infant daughter. He often carried her in a front pack while he did chores or took walks outside with both kids. I am certain this has led to a very close relationship between my husband and our now 3 year old daughter.

By the end of June, I started having extreme mood swings and had difficulty taking care of myself and my children. I was so tired and emotionally dysregulated that it would have been impossible for me to function at a job. If I had been the sole parent at home, I would not have been able to adequately meet my children's needs. I fear that I may have hurt them or neglected them if my husband had not been home to share the parenting responsibilities.

Eventually, after many months of struggling with my mood, I started taking an antidepressant. The medication helped enough that I was able to be more functional and take better care of myself and my children. I definitely would not have been able to function in a workplace during this time.

If my husband had not been home, I fear that my children and I would have suffered much more. His presence at home ensured that our children's needs were met and that I was able to rest and recover as much as possible after giving birth.

I am confident that Paid Family Medical Leave will greatly increase the postpartum experiences of all people. Birthing mothers will be able to get the rest and healing they need and all parents will be able to closely bond with their new infants.

Thank you for reading my testimony.