

Jessamy R. Hathaway

Naples, Maine

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Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and Honorable Members of the Labor Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee today.

My name is Jessamy Hathaway, and I am a healthcare professional living in Naples, Maine. I am here to voice my strong opposition to the bills before this committee that would weaken or repeal Maine's Paid Family and Medical Leave program.

I was born and raised in Maine, and after leaving the state to pursue my graduate degree, I interviewed for jobs all over the country. Although I longed to return home, one of the most difficult decisions I faced was whether I could afford to do so—especially with hopes of starting a family one day. States like Massachusetts and New York offered strong paid family leave protections, and that heavily influenced my decision-making.

It was only after Maine passed its Paid Family and Medical Leave program that it made financial sense for me to come back. My husband—also born and raised in Maine—and I returned together. I took a job providing primary care in a rural, medically underserved area because I believed in giving back to my home state.

But the reality is, we've delayed starting a family. Without paid family leave, we simply cannot afford the time off needed for physical recovery, newborn care and bonding, or establishing a healthy breastfeeding relationship. This program is what allows us to believe that building a future—and a family—in Maine is possible.

Now, I am deeply concerned to learn that there are multiple bills threatening to undo the very program that brought us home. If paid family leave is repealed or weakened, we would be forced to reconsider our commitment to staying here. We may need to take our professional skills elsewhere—somewhere that values and protects young families. We are not alone in this. Many young professionals like us are watching and weighing their futures based on what kind of support Maine is willing to provide.

Please do not let these bills turn back the clock. Maine's Paid Family and Medical Leave program is a lifeline for working families. I urge you to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on these harmful bills. Thank you again for the opportunity to share my story.

