

Anne M. Gallaudet
Scarborough, Maine

April 23, 2025

Re: LD 406, LD 539, LD 952, LD 1249, LD 1273, LD 1333 and LD 1400

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

I appreciate this opportunity to address you on this important matter. My name is Anne Gallaudet. I am a resident of Scarborough, Maine. I am writing *in opposition of* LD 406, LD 539, LD 952, LD 1249, LD 1273, LD 1333 and LD 1400.

LD 406 and LD 539 repeals Maine's Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) program.

LD 1273 repeals the PFML program be repealed and replaced with a voluntary program.

LD 952, and LD 1400 carve out certain sectors from participating in the PFML, respectively agricultural workers (LD 952) and public-school districts and their employees if a collective bargaining agreement provides substantially equivalent benefits (LD 1400).

LD 1333 proposes a series of modifications; indeed, the bill summary lists 19 specific significant changes.

LD 1249 changes the effective date of the PFML from January 1, 2026, to July 1, 2027, 18 months later. It also delays the start of the payment of benefits by 18 months, from May 1, 2026, to November 1, 2027.

In July 2023, Governor Janet Mills passed and signed into law the Maine PFML program. The statute and implementing regulations are based on models working in other states. Currently employers must pay into the Maine PFML insurance fund *starting* January 1, 2025. Employees can start taking leave no earlier than May 1, 2026.

I worked for almost three decades for the federal government; I was a *manager* of a large office for most of that time. The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) is an invaluable benefit for federal employees who struggle to do their jobs while caring for elderly sick parents, bond with their new babies, manage serious mental and/or physical injuries or illnesses, etc. It immensely improved office morale, helped us keep employees rather than face the turmoil of constant recruitment and ultimately boost productivity. As a manager in a high-volume office, it was a challenge for me when I lost a worker up to 12 weeks due to family and medical leave, and that happened *often*. However, our office appreciated the benefit, and we worked together when facing a staff

shortage due to FMLA usage. The evidence was crystal clear to me, as a manager, that when an employee is supported by FMLA, the benefit pays off in dividends for both the employee *and* employer.

My husband, working in another office in the same Agency, was able to take 12 weeks of FMLA-protected leave when his ex-wife, living in another state, suffered an aneurism and became permanently incapacitated, and *immediately* was no longer able to care for their severely disabled adult son (she was his adult son's sole caretaker). My husband's adult son is profoundly intellectually disabled (with no speech) and with cerebral palsy and a seizure disorder. My husband, who deeply loves his son, used FMLA-protected leave to have the necessary time to care for his son and work with the other state to find an appropriate group home placement in that state for his son – no small task. (It is almost impossible to move someone like his son from one state to another and get a ready placement in a group home, so it was necessary to find a group home in the state where his son had lived with his mom.) Even today, my husband appreciates the opportunity FMLA afforded him to manage what already was an incredibly stressful emergency for both him and his son and avoid facing certain job loss and lack of pay.

Maine's PFML program is a great achievement for the state, employers and employees. PFML program is popular among Mainers. Recent polling conducted from a nonpartisan firm indicated that that 70% of our residents' support PFML. The Maine Family Leave Coalition reports that the polling indicated:

Key findings from the poll highlight the broad popularity of PFML across demographics, with substantial backing across political affiliations, age groups, and regions across the state. More than six in ten respondents in every subgroup indicated support, including 65% of men and 76% of women; 86% of 18-34 year olds, 78% of 35-54 year olds, and 56% of those 55 and older; across all income brackets, including 70% of those making under \$50,000 per year, 75% of those making \$50-100k, and 64% of those making over \$100,000 per year; and in both Congressional Districts (72% of CD1 voters and 67% CD2 voters support or very strongly support.)

Now is not the time to repeal, amend or delay PFML law as the program begins to roll out. It is not time to undermine its solvency or deny certain sectors its invaluable benefits. The program has been carefully developed, and Mainers look forward to its benefits.

Thank you for considering my comments. Please vote "ought not to pass" on LD 406, LD 539, LD 952, LD 1249, LD 1273, LD 1333 and LD 1400.

Anne Gallaudet
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