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Re: LD 406, “An Act to Repeal the Laws Providing for Paid Family and Medical Leave and to Reimburse Taxpayers” (as well as LD 539, LD 952, LD 1169, LD 1221, LD 1249, LD 1273, LD 1307, LD 1333, LD 1400, and LD 1712)

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to LD 406 as well as all other bills which would repeal or otherwise limit the provisions of recently passed statutes providing for paid family and medical leave for Maine employees.

My name is Sally Wagley. I’m a retired attorney living in Brunswick. I was, during my career, a mother caring for two children and two stepchildren, and also a daughter caring for two frail, elderly parents. I was also a business owner, running a small law firm in Winthrop, Maine. Thus, I see the subject of paid family and medical leave from the vantage point of both a caregiver and an employer.

When I had each of my children, I was an employee of the State of Maine. At that time, the State did not provide any paid parenting leave; thus I had to use my limited sick leave and vacation leave (of which I had little, being in my early thirties and having just started my career) to recover from childbirth and provide early care for my infant children. I had to return to work only four or five weeks after giving birth, before I was physically and emotionally ready to do so and before I felt that each of my month-old infants were ready for day care.

Years later, over a period of eleven years, I cared for my ageing parents. I had the exhausting experience of juggling the requirements of work and doing what I could to ensure that my parents were safe and comfortable. By this point, I was in my law

practice, where I had a degree of flexibility and the support of sympathetic co-workers. Had this not been the case, I would have been in an impossible situation, having to either quit my job (which I could not afford to do) or neglect my parents. My mother, who was still living in her own apartment despite being confined to a wheelchair, would have had to be institutionalized.

Having had these experiences, I have great sympathy for families facing similar challenges.

I was also an employer. For more than twenty years, I was a partner and boss in a small law firm in Winthrop which employed eight people. Every one of those employees at one time or another experienced disruption in their work lives due to the birth of a child, the ageing of a parent, or their own or a family member's illness or injury. We always assured our employees that their jobs were secure and provided them with enough flexibility that they could do what they needed to do to care for themselves and their families and to eventually return to work. We continued to pay them for as long as we could, consistent with the needs of the business. And, with all of that, we managed to get the work done and continue to pay ourselves and our employees a decent wage. If the paid family and medical leave statute had been in effect at that time, we would not, as the employer, have had to bear the full cost of accommodating our employees' needs.

Having been an employer, I can well understand the concern for the bottom line and for keeping a business fully staffed. The current statute, as written, fairly balances the needs of employers and employees. Most important, it does not impose the full cost on employers, but instead funds the program through a broad-based tax on both employers and employees. The law provides support to a broad swath of Maine people; I can't imagine that there is a single family in our state that hasn't experienced caregiving responsibilities or medical issues. In my view, a tax of less than half a percent of an employee's wages on an employee and on an employer is a reasonable price to pay for a healthy work force.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to vote OUGHT NOT TO PASS on LD 406, as well as on other bills repealing or limiting statutes providing for paid family and medical leave. Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify.