

Dr. Meredith Jackson, MD  
Scarborough, Maine  
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Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and Honorable Members of the Labor Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Dr. Meredith Jackson. I'm a pediatrician and a resident of Scarborough, Maine. I am writing in opposition to the bills before the Committee.

As a pediatrician who has gotten to know and treat countless children and their families, I've seen the difference paid family and medical leave can make for babies, children, their parents, and their families. When mothers and parents are able to take time off work to care for their new children without risking their income or their entire job, health outcomes for both are better. Paid leave leads to declines in infant and childhood mortality rates, cases of postpartum depression, and rehospitalization rates for both mothers and babies. Paid family leave laws also lower rates of domestic violence and infant abusive head trauma. These programs increase the rate of breastfeeding initiation and continuation. They also increase vaccination rates, better protecting children from deadly diseases.

On the other hand, I've seen what happens when new parents are forced to return to work soon after birthing or adopting a child. I have admitted infants with failure to thrive from not being fed - due to inability to produce breast milk, afford formula, and/or be fed often enough due to parental sleep needs with the competing interests of returning to work and providing financially for their family. I have also seen families, lacking in sleep, supportive resources, and coping skills, abuse their infant in a moment of frustration leading to permanent disability and even death.

Maine's Paid Family and Medical Leave Program can prevent such adverse health outcomes and improve health and well-being for women, babies, and families across the state — IF we let it work. This program has been carefully developed, with input from many stakeholders and equal consideration given to both employers and employees. Until the program is fully operational and the actuarial analysis is performed, it's simply too early to start dismantling it. We should let the program do its job — improving health outcomes for families and Mainers of all ages — before making changes.

Mainers from all walks of life agree. Seventy percent of Mainers support this program, according to recent polling, including Republicans and Democrats, young and old. We should all agree that ensuring new parents can take time off work without forgoing their paycheck, particularly as costs of living continue to skyrocket, is beneficial for families and their health. Let's let the program work for babies, children, and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective as a physician with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on these bills. Thank you.