

April 23th, 2025

Testimony in Support of LD 406

"An Act to Repeal the Laws Providing for Paid Family and Medical Leave and to Reimburse Taxpayers"

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

My name is Paul Stearns. I reside in Guilford, Maine and I served in the 130th Maine Legislature where I was appointed to the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave and Benefits Program as the Republican appointee from the House of Representatives.

I write today in favor of repealing the law as it currently is written. The concept of providing a mechanism for employees to be able to take care of emergency issues is a good one but, as is often the case, the devil is in the details. With corrections, the leave program could be a boon to productivity.

The commission worked hard and studied a great deal of data. Unfortunately, in my opinion, the work for a program of this scope was rushed, the makeup of the commission was not balanced and far too many critical pieces were left to "rule making".

As you know, there are many components that have a financial impact. Many of these components ended up at the "Cadillac" level. Throughout the proceedings I maintained that the employees have to have an appropriate level of "skin in the game" for the program to be effective and sustainable.

Here are just a few examples to consider:

Bath Iron Works and the Maine State Chamber of Commerce have filed suit taking umbrage with the fact that businesses already providing a benefit program equal to or greater than the State program are required to pay in for 18 months to a program that they will never use.

All state employees have their employee share paid for by Maine taxpayers. Stake in the game? I think not!

My wife is a retired educator and currently substitutes in the classroom. She pays into the leave program every time she works and she is not even an employee!

I worked in Maine public schools my entire career. I can assure you that there are many school employees that will never, ever use this leave program, or if they do it will be only in the most dire circumstances. At the same time, there will be a population that will

look at this as an annual "use it or lose it" benefit and will go through all kinds after machinations to come up with a reason to take leave; all to the detriment of students, fellow workers and taxpayers. What do they have to lose? The long revered "Maine work ethic is eroding faster than some of our rural roads.

Please hit the pause button and take the necessary steps to tweak the current law to the benefit of all Mainers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Stearns", written in a cursive style.

Paul Stearns