

Carlie Fischer  
Bath, Maine  
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Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor:

My name is Carlie Fischer and I'm here today in opposition of the bills before you related to paid family and medical leave. I appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective.

While I am speaking in my capacity as a private citizen, I want to share that I am deeply fortunate to work for the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MECASA), a nonprofit organization that exists to support the 19,000 Mainers who experience sexual violence every year.<sup>1</sup> For several years, MECASA has offered 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave, even when the team was fewer than 15 employees. This was one of several great benefits that led me to accept their job offer. I have spent my entire career in the nonprofit sector, and I learned early on that strong benefits will allow me to focus on meaningful, service-oriented work without always stressing about money or scrambling for increasingly higher paychecks. That is not a life that I want for myself, and I have intentionally sought a career path that will allow me to leverage my skillset to create happier, healthier communities.

I'm glad I had the foresight to prioritize paid family and medical leave as a benefit during my job search, because it proved invaluable earlier this year. When I accessed those benefits, I was navigating one of the hardest experiences of my life. While the leave didn't solve everything, it gave me space to focus on my health without the added stress of worrying about my paycheck or depleting my sick time. As a single person with a mortgage, it was a tremendous relief not to have to choose between working while feeling unwell and sacrificing my income.

Having that time to recover meant I could return to work in a better place—more stable, more focused, and better equipped to produce high-quality work. I'm incredibly grateful to my employer for continuing to offer this benefit, even during times of uncertain funding and competing priorities. Their commitment has made a real difference for me, and I know it's done the same for many of my coworkers.

However, I'm not here today because I worry my personal benefits are at stake. I'm here because paid family and medical leave should be a standard that all Mainers can count on, not something that depends on how generous your employer can afford to be. Illness,

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<sup>1</sup>The Catherine Cutler Institute for the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. (2022). *2022 Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing public policy for safer communities*. [https://bpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/wpsites.maine.edu/dist/2/115/files/2023/01/2022-Maine-Crime-Victimization-Report\\_Final.pdf](https://bpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/wpsites.maine.edu/dist/2/115/files/2023/01/2022-Maine-Crime-Victimization-Report_Final.pdf)

injury, and caregiving are parts of life, and we all deserve the ability to cope with (or enjoy!) those situations without risking our jobs or financial stability.

Finally, paid family and medical leave is more than just a benefit. It's an investment in our workforce, our communities, Maine families, and individuals across the state. When people can take care of their health or support loved ones without fear of financial hardship, they are happier, less stressed, and more connected, all of which are critical determinants of health and prosocial behavior.

Thank you for your time and for considering this important legislation. I strongly urge you to vote "ought not to pass" on these bills, because Maine cannot afford to go backwards.