

**Testimony to the Committee on Labor: Paid Family Medical Leave Legislation – LD406, LD539, LD 575, LD 894, LD952, LD1169, LD1221, LD1249, LD1273, LD1307, LD1333, LD1400, LD1712**

Dear Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and esteemed members of the Committee on Labor,

My name is Julie Schirmer. I'm a resident of Falmouth and am testifying on behalf of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), Maine Chapter. I am here today in opposition to the bills before the committee today and any bill that would water down the existing Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML) program that was passed in 2023. PFML would have been so helpful to me in my younger years, when my husband and I were juggling work, two rambunctious daughters, and parents who required complicated and constant care during the last weeks and months prior to their deaths. Both my family and my husband's family lived in other states, so support was limited. A PFML option would have allowed me to support my family when things went sour with their health.

The physical, emotional, and economic toll put on families, mostly women, in caring for loved ones in times of need, whether that be for infants, children, spouses, or elderly family members, can be overwhelming. If chronic, it can be deadly. My mother's death was untimely and so clearly related to the physical and emotional stress of caring for my father without the help they needed.

The economic, health, and mental health benefits to instituting a strong PFML program are many. States that have passed PFML programs have seen costs lower than expected, employers have seen increased retention and improved morale, and workers can care for their loved ones without risking their jobs. Further research in these states have seen decreases in participation in TANF (Ybarra, 2023) and nutrition supplement (SNAP) programs (Bellisle, 2022) for new mothers. Dozens of studies have found that family members caring for ill relatives are more prone to developing depression than their same-age peers who aren't caregiving, with the risk increasing the longer the stint of caregiving is needed. (Jacobs).

PFML is associated with a greater likelihood for breastfeeding in new mothers, decreased likelihood of Post-Partum Depression in mothers on Medicaid (Perry, 2023), decreased risk for hospitalization of women and infants and higher odds of doing well with exercise and stress management (Jou, 2018). The baby boomer generation is reaching their 80's and with Maine's burgeoning elderly population, physical needs and dependence will be increasing, producing stress and strain on their adult children.

Mainers from all walks of life support PFML, as evidenced by the successful ballot initiative. The program works, but we need to give it time to work. NASW Maine asks you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on these bills that repeal the program, remove parts of the workforce from eligibility, suspend or tinker with the contribution level and benefits, or do anything to undermine the PFML bill passed in 2023. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Julie M. Schirmer, LCSW  
President of the Board  
NASW Maine Chapter

## References

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