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April 22, 2025

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

I am a part owner and the Managing Director of a law firm that employs over sixty people in Maine. I have closely followed the study of paid family and medical leave in Maine, the passage of the bill that enacted the program, and the crafting of the system following passage. I have also seen how some parts of the business community have resisted paid family and medical leave at every turn and now seek to repeal or severely limit the program. Having managed a medium sized business for over a decade and dealt with many employees who needed time off, I not only believe that bringing the benefits of paid leave to as many workers as possible is the right thing to do, but also that it will be good for Maine businesses and our economy.

Our firm offers paid family and medical leave benefits that generally exceed those that Maine's paid family and medical leave program would offer. What I have seen over the last decade is that these benefits work not only to help our employees in their times of need, but to the advantage of our firm. Successful businesses like ours depend on and must invest in the skills of our employees. Our business runs better when we have low turnover and the knowledge of long-term employees is put to use and passed on to new hires. When a skilled employee leaves our firm unexpectedly, productivity declines because knowledge, skill, and experience are lost.

Providing paid family and medical leave helps us attract great employees and retain them when they face challenges in their personal lives. We all encounter medical and family challenges that make it difficult or impossible for us to work. In those situations, we can either try to ignore the health or family issue or miss time at work. When paid leave is available, we can address the personal issue and then get back to work. If paid leave is not available, we face difficult choices and consequences. We may put off important medical care, fail to help a loved one in need, or find ourselves in financial distress. My experience is that employees who take advantage of paid leave are able to address their issues and then return to work. They feel supported by the firm and return as productive employees.

I believe that paid family and medical leave to the vast majority of Maine's workforce can give Maine an advantage over other states. This investment will improve workforce retention and productivity. As a state, Maine will enhance its reputation as a great place to live and work. To achieve these benefits, the upfront cost is a smart investment.

I know that there have been many different criticisms of the compromise approach that was adopted. No plan will be perfect for every business or every employee. However, we reached this junction through years of study, compromise, and hard work by smart people to create a plan. Rather than flinching at this moment, we should move forward with what we have and carefully study how the program works. If changes need to be made in the future, they can be.

In January, I was at the Maine State Bar Association meeting at a talk about the rollout of paid family and medical leave in Maine. There were many questions asked, and some skepticism shared. I remember clearly that an attorney who practices in Massachusetts stood up to make a comment. She said that as a small firm practitioner, the adoption of paid family and medical leave in Massachusetts had been a great benefit to her firm. In short, she advised those of us running firms in Maine to look forward to the program's rollout and the assurances it would give our employees that they could attend to important issues in their lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to reject efforts to repeal or otherwise limit the introduction of Paid Family and Medical Leave. I ask that you vote "Ought Not To Pass" on these bills. Thank you.