

Molly Kizer
Wells, Maine
April 23, 2025

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and Honorable Members of the Labor Committee: My name is Molly Kizer. I'm a resident of Wells and a member of the Southern Maine Workers' Center.

I am here today to testify against every bill that would serve to repeal, delay, or risk in any way the solvency of or the accessibility of the Paid Family Medical Leave program.

As a former high school teacher and a former farm worker, I understand the impacts that temporary health conditions can have on one's life. I originally moved to Maine to work on organic farms in the hopes of one day having my own farm, but a few years later I had to leave that work due to an injury. This also impacted my housing situation, and I had to move to another part of the state in order to find temporary employment and housing. Eventually I went back to school at UMaine to become a science teacher, where I could incorporate my love of growing plants into my lesson plans. While I loved teaching, it could be stressful and I worked a lot of hours. During my fifth year of teaching, my younger sister died in a car accident. I took some time off for bereavement, but it wasn't enough, and the grief combined with the stress and overworking led to anxiety and depression. I eventually decided to take FMLA unpaid and was in the process of getting the paperwork in order when everything shut down for COVID. As it so happened, being able to teach from home gave me the space and flexibility that I needed to take some time to heal. If it hadn't been for COVID, I would have had to go without pay while I did what I needed to take care of myself, which also would have meant that I would have less money for any medical treatment needed.

The Paid Family Medical Leave program in Maine is much more than just parental leave. As it is, most families are just one medical emergency away from losing everything, which probably explains why about 70% of Mainers support it. The program will at least provide a buffer so that people can continue to pay for their housing and food if they need to take significant time off from work. It can also give people the flexibility to get the treatment that they need before doing further damage to themselves. If I had that option when farming, I could have taken time to get physical therapy and return to work without upending my plans for the future. If I had been able to truly take a break from teaching when I needed it, I may not have left the profession.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I believe that in Maine we can take better care of our workers and our families. I strongly urge you to vote "Ought not to pass" on all bills such as LD 406, LD 539, LD 952 and LD 1249 that would destroy or limit this program before we've even had a chance to see how well it works.

Thank you.

Molly Kizer
Wells, ME