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LD 406

Good afternoon, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and esteemed members of the Labor Committee.

My name is Ophelia Hu Kinney. I live in Scarborough, and I'm here to urge you to vote ought not to pass on the bills before us aiming to dismantle Maine's Paid Family/Medical Leave (PFML) program.

I'm the parent of a toddler and a Portland-area faith leader. I also co-facilitate a parenting support group at Birth Roots in Portland – an organization committed to perinatal well-being for the whole family.

In my role at Birth Roots, I see that families without the security of paid leave struggle more than families that do. Recently, one of the families in our group had a beautiful baby girl. She was born early, and the small family unit needed as much support as it could get. However, one of her parents had to return to work only two weeks after she was born. Two weeks postpartum, a parent is often still bleeding and recovering.

If any of you have ever had the experience of bringing home a new baby, you'll know that those first weeks are an exhausting, bewildering blur.

My parents are Chinese immigrants, and they adhere religiously to the custom of *zuo yuezi*, a tradition of postpartum healing observed by many cultures around the world. For millennia, it's been common for new Chinese parents to rest for about 40 days. During this time, they give up working and homekeeping. As a result of this practice, the mental and physical health of new parents is a priority, and that pays dividends for individuals, families, and the workforce alike.

Maine's PFML program is only just getting underway. Now is not the time to clip its wings. It won't be easy to fine-tune the details, but that doesn't make it an unworthy endeavor for the sake of Maine's families.

I urge this committee, and the full legislature, to vote ought not to pass on the bills before us taking aim at Maine's PFML program.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to Maine's families and children.