

Testimony of the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC)

In Support of LD 575 and LD 894

In Opposition to LD 406, LD 539, LD 1273, LD 952, LD 1400, LD 1249, LD 1333, LD 1712, LD 1169, LD 1307, LD 1221

Public Hearing: Labor Committee April 23, 2025, 1:00 PM

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

My name is Ruben Torres, and I am the Advocacy, Communications, and Policy Manager for the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC). MIRC represents over 100 organizations across the state, working to improve the economic and social standing of immigrants in Maine. I am writing today representing our coalition **in support of LD 575, LD894**, and in **strong opposition to efforts to weaken, delay, or repeal Maine's Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) program** through LD 406, LD 539, LD 1273, LD 952, LD 1400, LD 1249, LD 1333, LD 1712, LD 1169, LD 1307, and LD 1221.

At its core, PFML is about protecting what matters most: the health of our families and the dignity of our workforce. No one should have to choose between their job and caring for a loved one, or between their health and their livelihood. Yet for far too long, workers—especially those in low-wage or frontline positions—have faced this impossible decision. PFML isn't a luxury. It's a lifeline.

This program was developed through an extensive process involving stakeholders from every corner of the state—businesses, families, caregivers, and workers. It reflects a shared commitment to ensuring Mainers can meet life's most urgent moments with the security of knowing their job will still be there when they return. It is modestly funded—contributions are capped at 1% of wages, split between employers and employees, and small businesses are exempt from employer-side contributions. These rates were chosen with economic feasibility in mind and with the goal of long-term solvency.

PFML is about honoring the contributions of all working Mainers, including those who are too often excluded from benefit systems. Immigrants are an essential part of Maine's workforce. They work in every sector, from healthcare to food processing, from education to transportation, often in roles with few built-in protections. PFML provides a basic, long-overdue assurance: that when a worker or their loved one faces a medical crisis, they will not have to risk their job—or their livelihood—to respond.

For the immigrant workers our members serve, PFML would be transformational. Whether it's a new parent bonding with their child, a caregiver supporting an elderly parent, or someone recovering from surgery without fear of being fired, this policy makes it possible for families to be whole and for workers to stay in the labor force. In a time when Maine faces acute labor shortages, we cannot afford to undermine a program that makes it easier for people to stay in the workforce long-term.

Efforts to roll back this program before it even begins risk leaving behind exactly the workers who are least likely to have other safety nets—immigrant Mainers among them. We urge you to hold the line. Don't tinker with solvency by introducing carve-outs. Don't undermine access by delaying implementation. Let this program work as intended, for everyone who calls Maine home.

This policy reflects our values: family, care, dignity, and community. Seventy percent of Mainers support this program. That support cuts across party lines, age groups, and regions.

Paid leave is not a partisan issue. It is a down payment on the kind of inclusive future we know is possible—and that Maine's immigrant communities are helping to build every day.

We urge the Committee to defend Maine's PFML program as it was intended: universal, equitable, and stable.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

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For any questions, please feel free to contact MIRC Advocacy, Communications, and Policy Manager Ruben Torres at rtorres@maineimmigrantrights.org