

Jim Lysen
Lewiston
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Dear Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing: My name is Jim Lysen, I live in Lewiston, and I am here to support LD 1964, "An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) Benefits Program" for Maine.

It is past time to pass and fund paid leave for all Maine workers in order to ensure that Maine families are healthy, thriving, and successful. Maine families are ready for and want a PFML program, and they deserve one. Paid family and medical leave makes workers, families, businesses and our whole economy stronger and healthier. It's time for lawmakers to deliver what Mainers so clearly support. It is affordable and possible. We can do this!

All Mainers, regardless of what they do for a living or their income, should be able to take care of themselves and a loved one in times of illness or other crises without going into heavy debt, risking job or housing loss, or other terrible tradeoffs. But the majority of Mainers do not have that ability. And that is NOT RIGHT!

11 states and DC already have such legislation. Maine must be next. Benefits are proportional to how much workers earn. No one is left behind! Everyone contributes according to their ability to pay. A state PFML program would also be good for the small businesses (15 or fewer employees) who employ more than half of Maine workers, since they do not have to pay the employee premium. And the statewide PFML program is much less expensive than private plans since ALL Mainers are all contributing together.

My wife died of cancer in September and I felt fortunate that I was retired and could take the time to provide some care for her during her illness and subsequent (to us sudden) death. However, my daughter was still working and without a PFML policy statewide she was unclear on how to manage her time off to provide care for her Mom during what was to be her Mom's last weeks. She regrets not being with her Mom during those weeks, and the sadness still lingers with her. That, again, is NOT RIGHT!

I know there are a lot of unmet needs in this state. However, this program will pay for itself over time after one-time start-up costs, and it will allow our scant resources to go much further to provide better for the needs of Mainers. Please support LD 1964 with an "Ought to Pass " vote and allow Mainers to access a program that will allow them to care for themselves as well as their loved ones. It is the right thing to do!

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today and I will attempt to answer any questions you might have.