

Senator Mike Tipping, Representative Amy Roeder and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Patricia Kidder, and I live in Springvale, part of the city of Sanford. I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1964: An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program.

My family used to own a beautiful marina on Square Pond in Shapleigh, and I worked there growing up. We were all self-employed and I was considered a subcontractor. It was the '70s so it worked until I went away to college. After college I moved to Portland to start my own career away from the marina.

Everything went well at first. My parents hired someone to help and everything was going smoothly until my Dad got sick in the middle of my first summer away. He couldn't work and he was the only mechanic. My mom called me in a panic and I left my job immediately and went back home to the marina and took over my father's position. A Paid Family and Medical Leave benefit would have helped me and my parents through that difficult time.

Because the marina business was seasonal, I needed a winter job to help pay the bills. I started working preparing income tax returns for one of our customers. I soon started my own tax preparation business which I still own and operate today.

In 1990, while self-employed both preparing taxes and mechanical work with my parents, I got pregnant with my first child. I was 31 years old and at the end of my first trimester I started spotting. My doctor told me I needed to rest, I did and it stopped. I started working again and the spotting came back so my doctor put me on bed rest, but I was self-employed. If you didn't work, you had no money to pay your bills. If you didn't work, nothing would get done. My self-employment was seasonal so you didn't have more time to do the work later. You can't postpone summer and everyone wants their boat.

The spotting stopped again and we thought everything was going to be okay. A few weeks later, I thought I had bad heartburn like many pregnant women but I was wrong. I was in labor and my husband had to rush me to the hospital where my only son was still born.

If Maine had Paid Family and Medical Leave then, I would have rested. But like so many small business owners, I couldn't afford to. I had to keep working, there were deadlines to meet and bills to pay.

My husband's grief was so immense that he had a mental health breakdown and had to be hospitalized. But I, as a small business owner, still had to work, and truly, I gave birth to my stillborn son at 7:30am and I was waiting on my customers by 2:30pm that very afternoon. No one should ever have to go back to work the same day a beloved family member dies. No one should have to choose between their health or caring for a loved one and having enough money to pay their bills.

I went on to have two beautiful, healthy daughters. But we knew that any pregnancies I had were going to be risky and that I was going to need to have long-term paid sick leave. We knew that while I was self-employed it wasn't an option. My husband and I had to make a decision. Did we want to continue living on Square Pond with me, self-employed at the marina or did we want to leave in order for me to bear children?

Again, if Maine had Paid Family and Medical leave, I would have taken the time I needed and then gone back to work. Instead, I had to leave my family's cherished business, and eventually they had to sell it.

We shouldn't have to make those kinds of decisions, when we need to take care of ourselves and our families. That's why I'm glad the commission has figured out how Maine can have the paid family and medical leave system that all Mainers deserve. I am asking you to please vote in favor of LD 1964: An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program.

Thank you for your time and I will do my best to answer any questions.

Patricia E. Kidder  
Income Tax Preparation  
4 Carpenter Street  
Springvale, Maine 04083-1109  
207-977-3325