

Testimony of Jeff McCabe
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In Support of LD 1964, An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program, Sponsored by Senator Matthea Daughtry

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing
Thursday, May 25, 2023, Cross Building Room 202, and Electronically

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, members of the Committee on Labor and Housing, I'm Jeff McCabe, director of politics and legislation for the Maine Service Employees Association, Local 1989 of the Service Employees International Union. We are a labor union representing over 13,000 Maine workers. We are here in support of LD 1964.

Today you are hearing from many Maine workers. Some currently lack the leave time they need from their jobs to provide care for family members such as newborns, adopted children or foster children. Others lack the leave time they need from their jobs to address medical conditions of their own or those of their family members. Please listen closely to their stories. These are the workers driving Maine's economy. Their families represent both the current generation and next generation of Maine workers. Maine's economy cannot grow and become stronger without Maine's working families being able to take care of themselves.

Right now, scores of Maine workers lack any paid family or medical leave whatsoever – and we think that is inexcusable. It's past time for all Maine workers to have access to the level of paid family or medical leave proposed in LD 1964. Under this legislation, eligible Maine workers would be covered for up to 12 weeks of paid family or medical leave a year. There would be a family cap of 16 weeks a year. Eligible Maine workers could take this leave time once per year. Those requirements in LD 1964 all seem reasonable. LD 1964's implementation date in 2026 means that even if it were passed and enacted into law today, there would be ample time for both workers and employers to prepare for its implementation.

It's important to note that the paid family and medical leave program as proposed in LD 1964 would cover a partner or spouse providing direct care to their sick partners or spouses. We think that level of coverage would be especially helpful for Maine's working families given both the acute shortage and high cost of direct care workers in Maine.

We're also encouraged that LD 1964 provides leave time to care for and bond with newborns, adopted children and foster children. This level of coverage would be especially helpful to Maine's working families given the widespread shortage of quality, affordable childcare in Maine. Some of you are aware that I have a 2-year-old son; we did not find childcare for our son until he was 15 months old. We started looking and got on waiting lists in Augusta and Skowhegan while awaiting his arrival. During the 15 months of waiting for childcare, my wife reduced her amount of work, grandparents helped out, and I used leave time.

While we are supportive of LD 1964, we want to caution the committee and the Legislature around privatizing this program. We are aware that 11 states and the District of Columbia have a paid family and medical leave (PFML) on the books. **Connecticut has elected to outsource the program and it appears to be having difficulties <https://ctmirror.org/2023/02/13/ct-paid-leave-authority-to->**

withhold-375000-from-claims-company-aflac/. All other current state PFML programs are or will be administered directly by a state agency.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask you to support LD 1964. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions.