

*Dear Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing,* My name is Elinor Lisa from North Yarmouth Maine. I represent a grassroots organization called Paid Leave for ME. I am in support of LD 1964 *An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program.*

4 years ago I gave testimony in support of a different paid leave bill, LD 1410. Since then I have not stopped advocating for paid leave. This passion began after I had my children. //

Nothing prepares you for having children.

My son was in the NICU for three weeks and my husband only had a week and a half of paternity leave.

After the birth of my daughter I suffered from postpartum depression and I needed pelvic floor physical therapy. But one thing I didn't have to worry about was our finances. We could afford to take unpaid leave and I removed myself from the workforce.

However, What if that was not the case?

I had heard that in the state of New Jersey, there WAS Paid Leave. As of July 2020 New Jersey expanded their benefits from 4 to 12 consecutive weeks of benefits per year to bond with a new child or care for a loved one and NJ workers can now get up to 85% of their average weekly wage when taking paid leave.

I do not want to move to New Jersey! I want to pay into a system here in Maine.

Since starting paid leave for ME I've collected stories

joined the Maine Paid Leave Coalition

spoken at Paid Leave Rallies,

and helped collect a portion of the 80,000 signatures to get Paid Family Medical Leave on the ballot for a future referendum.

Today my son is 7 and my daughter is 5. Will they know a world where paid family and medical leave is a policy? Until that day comes I continue to advocate. I owe it to our children. I owe it to the 80,000 people who gladly signed their names to the ballot initiative and said "Yes, we need this!" Yes, we need LD 1964!! Thank you for your time.