

inadequate nondiscrimination protections. Inclusive paid leave is part of a suite of policy changes that would help address many of these difficulties.

As written, this paid family and medical leave bill is of critical importance for LGBTQ+ communities in Maine given the well-documented health disparities we experience as a result of high uninsurance rates, lack of cultural competency among healthcare providers, and stress associated with a legacy of isolation and discrimination.<sup>1</sup> LGBTQ+ Mainers are in need of this inclusive paid family and medical leave bill.

Research shows that LGBTQ+ older adults, who are significantly more likely to be childless and living without a partner than non-LGBTQ+ older adults, also develop and maintain strong relationships with their chosen family.<sup>2</sup> These older adults may be less likely to have family support when they need care and often rely on families-of-choice that are composed of close relationships that are the equivalent of family. Sixty-four percent of LGBTQ+ baby boomers said that they have a “chosen family,” defined as “a group of people to whom you are emotionally close and consider ‘family’ even though they are not biologically or legally related.”<sup>3</sup>

Lastly, it is essential to recognize that workers’ families come in many forms beyond those that fit precise legal definitions. traditional definitions of family. That is why we support the current inclusive definition of family in this bill, which includes: *any other individual with whom the covered individual has a significant personal bond that is or is like a family relationship, regardless of biological or legal relationship.*

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin L. Ard and Harvey J. Makadon, “Improving the Health Care of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) People: Understanding and Eliminating Health Disparities” (Boston: The Fenway Institute, 2012), available at [http://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/wp-content/uploads/12-054\\_LGBTHealtharticle\\_v3\\_07-09-12.pdf](http://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/wp-content/uploads/12-054_LGBTHealtharticle_v3_07-09-12.pdf);

Kellan E. Baker, Laura E. Durso, and Andrew Cray, “Moving the Needle: The Impact of the Affordable Care Act on LGBT Communities” (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2014), available at <https://americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/report/2014/11/17/101575/moving-the-needle/>.

<sup>2</sup> Movement Advancement Project and SAGE, “Improving the Lives of LGBT Older Adults” (2010), <http://www.lgbtmap.org/file/improving-the-lives-of-lgbt-older-adults.pdf>. Note, however, that LGBTQ people of color are raising children at higher rates than white LGBTQ people. See Angeliki Kastanis and Bianca Wilson, “Race/Ethnicity, Gender and Socioeconomic Wellbeing of Individuals in Same-sex Couples” (Los Angeles: The Williams Institute, 2014), available at <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/research/census-lgbt-demographics-studies/census-comparison-fb-2014/>.

<sup>3</sup> MetLife Mature Market Institute and American Society on Aging, “Still Out, Still Aging: The MetLife Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Baby Boomers” (2010), available at <https://www.metlife.com/assets/cao/mmi/publications/studies/2010/mmi-still-out-still-aging.pdf>.

This definition would support families across every single demographic in Maine, in addition to the needs of the LGBTQ+ community, immigrant families, migrant workers, and others whose traditional families have been torn apart by abuse, domestic violence, incarceration, war, substance use disorder, and poverty. Other states have managed well with more inclusive definitions of family, and we can as well.<sup>4</sup>

This broad family definition will benefit all workers, given the diversity of family structures here in Maine. The evidence is clear: paid family and medical plans like this one work. They will improve the health of Mainers across generations, add stability to our workforce, and reduce the stress on families.

We support LD 1964, It's right for Maine.

Thank you,

Gia Drew (she/her)  
Executive Director. EqualityMaine

GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders  
Portland Outright  
Maine Transgender Network

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<sup>4</sup> N.J. Stat. Ann. § 43:21-27(n) ("Family member" means ... any other individual that the employee shows to have a close association with the employee which is the equivalent of a family relationship.); Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-51kk(6) ("Family member" means ...or an individual related to the employee by blood or affinity whose close association the employee shows to be the equivalent of those family relationships . . . ."); Or. Rev. Stat. § 657B.010(18) ("Family member" means: ... (h) Any individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with a covered individual is the equivalent of a family relationship."); Colo. Rev. Stat. § 8-13.3-503(11) (As shown by the covered individual, any other individual with whom the covered individual has a significant personal bond that is or is like a family relationship, regardless of biological or legal relationship."); Wash. Rev. Code 50A.05.010(11) (...any individual who regularly resides in the employee's home or where the relationship creates an expectation that the employee care for the person, and that individual depends on the employee for care. 'Family member' includes any individual who regularly resides in the employee's home, except that it does not include an individual who simply resides in the same home with no expectation that the employee care for the individual.).