



# Maine Youth Camp Association

Testimony of Newell Augur  
Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing

In Opposition to LD 1964, An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program

Sponsored by Senator Mattie Daughtry

May 25, 2023

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing. My name is Newell Augur. I am a resident of Yarmouth and I am testifying on behalf of the Maine Youth Camp Association ("MYCA"), the non-profit organization of children's camps throughout our state. MYCA is opposed to LD 1964, An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program. We believe there are other alternatives for providing this benefit that would be better than the expensive and unwieldy one envisioned in this bill.

Children's camps are an important part of the fabric of our state, providing an outdoor educational experience for children from Maine, from across the country and around the world. Maine is the leader for children's camping. The first camps were established here more than 100 years ago. Today, there are approximately 175 children's camps in Maine serving an estimated 40,000 children annually. About half of all camper days are filled by Maine children. In a normal season, Maine youth camps are responsible for approximately \$500 million of economic activity.

Our members hire more than 13,000 people every year to serve as counselors, nurses, kitchen staff, maintenance, program directors, front office, among many other responsibilities. For many of them, it's their first

job. The vast majority work less than 120 days. Many of them aren't from Maine, and a good portion of that group are not even from the United States.

As written, LD 1964 would require Maine Summer Camps to provide a significant number of these employees anywhere from 12 to 16 weeks of paid leave. This seems incongruous given that our camp season lasts roughly the same amount of time as the amount of paid leave – each year - to which they would be entitled. Similarly, the parameters of the benefit are unusually vague, and almost limitless in its scope. An employee is allowed to take time to care for anyone with whom he or she has a “significant personal bond.” This “bond” does not require any biological or legal relationship and is created merely upon the employee’s subjective declaration that the “bond” exists.

Given the significant number of employees that we hire every summer, we are acutely aware of the workforce shortage crisis our State - and specifically our industry – is facing. A paid absence from camp for as long as 75% of the entire operating season would present a challenge in normal circumstances; it would present an insurmountable challenge now.

Rather than building upon the framework of the state’s existing family medical leave law, LD 1964 effectively creates a new short-term disability insurance program that is far out of line with family medical leave programs in our neighboring New England states. Vermont and New Hampshire’s programs are both voluntary. Connecticut and Rhode Island do not require employers to contribute any costs related to the program.

Maine Youth Camps provide our employees with good benefits and time in Maine’s great outdoors as part of their work experience. We support efforts to provide all employees with fair wages and good benefits. But those benefits must be clearly defined, carefully balanced against costs, consistent with existing workplace challenges, and properly tailored towards those who need it. We are confident that there are ways to fulfill all these objectives. LD 1964 in its current form is not one of them.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I’d be happy to answer any questions.