



## Maine Women's Lobby

February 5, 2025

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor,

I join you today on behalf of the Maine Women's Lobby. For over forty years, the Maine Women's Lobby has worked to build gender justice in Maine through legislative advocacy and systems change.

We are before you today **In Support of LD 60, An Act to Allow Employees to Request Flexible Work Schedules**, and thank Representative Roeder for sponsoring this important bill.

We were deeply grateful that this committee voted "Ought to Pass" on this bill last session and are hopeful for your remaining commitment on this proposal.

**While there are many reasons that employees might request a flexible work schedule, we would like to share the particular benefit that flexibility can provide for caregivers.** In Maine, women bear the majority of the unpaid caregiving load - 85 percent of caregivers are women.<sup>1</sup> are the primary caregivers for minors, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities at much higher rates than men. On average, women spend eight and a half more hours per week on parenting and domestic duties compared to men<sup>2</sup>. The burden of this unpaid care has a specific economic impact: women in Maine are far more likely to work part-time or lower-paying (more flexible) roles in order to accommodate childcare or family care, which reduces their lifetime earnings, social security, and other retirement benefits. Women are twice as likely to enter retirement in poverty than men, in large part due to this caregiving role.<sup>3</sup>

Caregiving needs- such as taking a parent or child recovering from a surgery to regular doctors appointment during "working hours" or caring for a new baby- are often

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<sup>1</sup> Cutler Institute of Health Policy (2020). Maine State Plan on Aging. Retrieved from: [https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/2020-2024\\_Maine\\_State\\_Plan\\_on\\_Aging\\_Needs\\_Assessment\\_Report.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/2020-2024_Maine_State_Plan_on_Aging_Needs_Assessment_Report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>The Gender Equity Policy Institute (2024). The Free Time Gap: How Unpaid Care Reinforces Women's INequality. Retrieved from: <https://thegepi.org/the-free-time-gender-gap/#:~:text=In%20an%20average%20week%2C%20women,and%20taking%20care%20of%20children.>

<sup>3</sup> Cutler Institute of Health Policy (2022). The Economic Security of Older Women in Maine: A Data Report. Retrieved from: [https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/2020-2024\\_Maine\\_State\\_Plan\\_on\\_Aging\\_Needs\\_Assessment\\_Report.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/2020-2024_Maine_State_Plan_on_Aging_Needs_Assessment_Report.pdf)

time-bound responsibilities, meaning that there is an acute need for caregiving in a short period of time. Scheduling flexibility could mean the difference between a caregiver being able to stay fully employed or making the decision to leave their employment altogether.

**Creating more caregiver-friendly workplace policies is a clear way to enable women– and all caregivers– to more fully participate in the workforce, and this bill aims to do exactly that.** At a time when Maine's workforce is increasingly unstable, promoting participation is key to workers and employers, and we **hope you will vote Ought to Pass on LD 60.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

**Destie Hohman Sprague**

**Executive Director**