

Orion Ortolf
Lewiston, ME
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Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and honorable members of the Labor Committee, my name is Orion Ortolf, I'm a resident of Lewiston, and I'm submitting this testimony in opposition of the bills before the committee today.

About a year and a half ago, my father was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. He and my mother are in their late sixties, and still live independently in the house I grew up in in Massachusetts. I have two older sisters - one also lives in Massachusetts with her partner, and has a dual diagnosis of Parkinson's disease and MS; and the other sister lives in New Hampshire with her husband and their first baby who is almost 1 year old. That leaves me as the sibling with the most capacity for caretaking. My Dad's condition can fluctuate rapidly, and while my mother is in relatively good health at the moment and is able to care for him I worry that that could change at any time.

I have made a life and home of my own in the beautiful state of Maine, but I know that I might have to put things on pause at any time to help care for my parents. I am currently about a year away from graduating with my Master's degree in Social Work from the University of New England, and plan on being a licensed therapist here in Maine where they are so desperately needed. Having the ability to take time off to help care for my Dad without suffering the financial burden of missing paychecks would make a world of difference for me and my family.

This is why I urge you to protect the robust Paid Family Medical Leave program that is almost in place. It is poised to help so many Mainers, including those like myself who have to care for a family member with a serious health condition, time to bond with a new child after birth, adoption, or foster placement, and space to heal for people experiencing domestic or sexual violence. PFML has many other benefits, including keeping people employed and in the workforce and helping small businesses compete fairly with large corporations when it comes to hiring and benefits - all of which has been proven by more than a dozen states who already have programs like this in place.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have, and I strongly urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on these bills.