

Filipe Menezes
Lewiston

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and honorable members of the Labor Committee: My name is Filipe Menezes, I live in Lewiston, and I am here to testify against all attempts to water down Maine's paid family and medical leave policy.

In March 2019 I began working as a paper mill operator for NEPW Logistics. It was the best job I ever had in my life—the benefits, the schedule, everything was just perfect. In November 2019 I began to notice problems with my mental health, and was hospitalized for two weeks. I was diagnosed with schizophrenia. I let a social worker know about my hospitalization, and they talked to my employer. My employer supported me through that time with short-term disability payments—about a third of what I would normally make. I could have asked for more time off, but I did not want to stay home or in the hospital. I wanted my full paycheck. I came back to work.

But I wasn't doing well. My boss had to send me home a few times, and I stopped showing up regularly. I was confused and overwhelmed. The medications I was prescribed for my condition were making me sleep for hours and hours. My brain had changed, and I was making too many mistakes. In January 2020, I lost my job.

I probably made the wrong decision, going back to work as quickly as I did. But I needed the money. With more financial support, I could have stayed home longer to make sure I was ready to work again.

There are thousands of Mainers like me, who want to contribute and like to work. And sometimes we can't. It's hard to hold a job when you're sick; the illness will bother you all the time. Paid leave is one way we can make a path for everyone to contribute.

Thank you for your time.