

**Testimony of Beth White
Maine Service Employees Association, SEIU Local 1989**

In Support of LD 575, "An Act to Ensure Equitable Access to the Paid Family and Medical leave Benefits program by removing the Requirement that Leave Must Be Scheduled to Prevent Undue Hardship on the Employer"

and

In Opposition to LDs 406, 539, 952, 1169, 1221, 1249, 1273, 1307, 1333, 1400 and 1712

**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor
Wednesday, April 23, 2025**

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Committee on Labor, I'm Beth White, director of politics and legislation for the Maine Service Employees Association, Local 1989 of the Service Employees International Union. We are a labor union representing over 13,000 Maine workers. We support the rights of all Maine workers to be able to access paid leave to address medical conditions of their own or to care for their family members when needed. Workers are the ones driving Maine's economy. Their families represent both the current generation and next generation of Maine workers. Maine's economy cannot grow and become stronger without Maine's working families being able to take care of themselves.

We're here today in support of LD 575, which would remove the requirement that leave must be scheduled to prevent undue hardship on the employer. Many of the things that would cause a worker to need to access the Paid Family Medical Leave program cannot be planned in advance, whether that be the birth of a new child or an illness. Workers should have the ability to take time when they need it.

We're also here in opposition to LDs 406, 539, 952, 1169, 1221, 1249, 1273, 1307, 1333, 1400 and 1712. MSEA is opposed to any legislation to repeal the Paid Family Medical Leave Program or any legislation that would create harmful delays, carveouts or solvency risks to the program.

We strongly believe that working people deserve access to paid leave; being able to take time away from their jobs to care for themselves or their loved ones is essential, and being able to continue to be paid means that employees won't have to choose between caring for themselves or a family member and working to put food on the table.

Under current law, Subchapter 10 deals with collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). LDs 1333 and 1712 would each carve out the portion of the premium that employees and employers pay

for PFML; we feel strongly that the repeal of the right to collectively bargain over the portion of the premium for the PFML program is an attack on collective bargaining rights and we ask this committee to oppose any efforts to limit the ability to collectively bargain over PFML. LD 1712 also would make changes to the weekly benefit amount by cutting the weekly benefit, making it even harder for working people to take time off from work to care for themselves or their family members.

We also oppose the provision of LD 1712 to reduce the wage replacement to 65%, which would make the program less accessible to people with low and moderate incomes. We feel strongly that this change would have a disproportionate impact on those Mainers who most need paid leave and who would not be able to afford to utilize this program if they received 65% wage replacement rather than the current 90%.

Overall, we oppose any efforts to create harmful carveouts and delays to the program, whether by carving out certain sectors or delaying implementation of PFML. We also oppose the pieces of legislation that would create solvency risks in the program.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions.