

Testimony by James L. Robbins Concerning The Paid Family Medical Leave Act
April 23, 2025

Good afternoon. My name is James Robbins. I am a former owner and president of Robbins Lumber Inc. We own white pine sawmills in Searsmont and East Baldwin, Maine. We employ about two hundred Mainers. We have some serious concerns with the Paid Family Medical Leave Act.

Maine is a tough state to do business in with some of the highest taxes and electrical rates in the nation. This 1% tax just adds to the burden – but the biggest problem is how are we going to keep our mills staffed with the time off and dollar benefits that this PFML provides?

When employees can stay out for twelve weeks and receive 90% of their pay, incur no transportation costs, don't have to hire childcare, and don't have to pay Maine income tax, they will be netting as much or more pay, than if they were working full time. There will be absolutely to incentive to return to work.

This program even pays part time workers. If an employee works part time for two different employers, they can take 12 weeks off from one and still work for the other,, or they could work full time for the other employer and give themselves a 50% raise.

If you have several members of a family working for you, there is nothing that says they can't all take off twelve weeks. This could create huge worker shortages .

There are many key jobs, like a sawyer, that take a year or more to train for. When a key employee is gone for twelve weeks it can seriously disrupt production while we are training a replacement.

We have many long-time employees that have 4-5 weeks of vacation. With 12 weeks of PFML on top of this, we are now losing an employee for 16-17 weeks per year.

When an employee goes out for 12 weeks, we must hold that job open for them when they return. That means we may now have to lay off their replacement and therefore increase our unemployment costs.

What if an employee chooses to take one day a week off in this program? 12 weeks times 5 days per week equals sixty days. This means an employee could work only four days a week all year around.

When workers see others working four days a week and getting paid the same as them for working five days, they are going to want to do the same thing,

as will happen when they see other workers staying out for twelve weeks and getting paid the same as them.

What about teachers, who already have summers and a few other weeks off each year? What if during the school year they decide to take another twelve weeks off? It will be very difficult for school administrators to keep their classrooms staffed with qualified teachers – so our schoolchildren will suffer.

I am very concerned about what this law is going to do to our labor supply and cost. It is one more heavy burden for companies here in Maine to bear. It is one more excuse for companies to locate somewhere else rather than Maine.

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

James L. Robbins

Robbins Lumber Company