



MCEDV.

The Maine Coalition
to End Domestic Violence

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**Testimony of Hanna Gregory, on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
In Opposition of LD 1712: “An Act to Amend the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program to
Balance Support of Businesses and Employees”
Wednesday, April 23, 2025**

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, my name is Hanna Gregory, and I am the Housing Services Coordinator at the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV)¹, testifying in opposition of LD 1712: An Act to Amend the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program to Balance Support of Businesses and Employees.

Maine’s Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) Benefits Program was very carefully developed and researched, and the proposed bill will deter Mainers from receiving the care and protection that they deserve. For most survivors of domestic violence, having the ability to take a few days off over the course of separating and/or navigating their way through a path to safety is adequate, but for some – those whose abusers present particularly high levels of risk – a paid family leave of several weeks could be a life- saving option, providing three essential things: time, money, and long-term economic stability. Paid safe leave can create the space for a survivor to pursue support for their own safety and trauma healing needs, as well as those of their children, without impacting the household budget, which better enables them to keep their jobs and advance in the workforce, which can ultimately make the difference in the creation and long-term maintenance of an independent household – separate from the abusive partner.

We strongly support PFML because we have seen how the absence of paid family and medical leave means that survivors must rely on the income of the person abusing them, which compromises their options and resources to advance their safety needs. The proposed bill will not enhance survivors’ ability to utilize PFML, but hinder it, as certain employers will have the ability to put their business’ needs above that of their employees.

MCEDV and our member programs across the state have years of experience in working with survivors who have tried to utilize safe leave. However, allowing an employer to deny the ability to take safe leave if it would place an “undue hardship” on the employer or if the employee failed to give “reasonable notice,” and, allowing an employer to determine what that means has resulted in inequitable access to this program. This bill will not only allow employers to inappropriately insert their own judgment as to what level of risk a survivor’s situation poses and the timeframe they can wait to engage in an eligible activity, but for some, completely deny their ability to access the

¹ MCEDV represents a membership of the eight regional domestic violence resource centers across Maine as well as two culturally specific service providers. Last year, our programs provided services to more than 12,000 survivors of domestic abuse and violence and their children in our state.

program, based on the business size, the time of year, and other employees' requested time off. This bill also looks to lower the financial penalty for employer noncompliance, making it that much easier for employers to deny their staff these benefits. So, what does this mean for Mainers? This means that your access to the PFML Benefits program is entirely dependent on where you work, and who you work for. Generally, the only survivors who have benefited from safe leave are those who work for employers who are already inclined to value the safety of their employees and accommodate their needs to take time off to respond to address their safety. That leaves so many survivors in Maine making impossible choices.

All Mainers deserve an equal opportunity to utilize these protections in times of crisis. Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns for LD 1712. If MCEDV or any of our member programs can be of any assistance to the Committee in your discussions on this issue, please do not hesitate to let us know.

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