
**Testimony of Hanna Gregory, on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
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”
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 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.

For survivors of domestic abuse, keeping their job and having access to personal finances can be the difference in whether they are able to leave their partner. Paid safe leave can create the space for an individual survivor to address their safety and trauma needs, as well as the needs of their children, without concern that doing so will endanger their employment or compromise their ability to take care of their basic household expenses. Paid Safe leave can enable survivors to remain in and advance in the workforce, which supports their ability to maintain a safe and stable household, separate from the person who has harmed them. Paid safe leave can play a critical role in supporting survivors in times of crisis, so long as they are able to utilize it.

However, the extent to which safe leave is accessible to individual survivors is heavily influenced by the rules that govern the Maine Paid Family and Medical Leave Program. Unfortunately, the current rules construct a system where an individual survivor is not actually able to access safe leave without the consent of their employer. This leaves ample room for the kinds of bias and judgment that victims we work with regularly face in their community and that serve as a barrier to achieving safety and stability. Withheld consent to safe leave, in the moment of crisis, functionally prevents the survivor from utilizing safe leave entirely, as it is a leave type that is generally only applicable in that time of crisis. There is little to no time to pre-plan when one will need to seek medical treatment following physical violence, when one will need to flee and live in an undisclosed location to prevent further stalking, or when one needs to take time off to file for a protection from abuse order. While these are all typical reasons as to why a survivor may utilize the paid safe leave program, they are not plannable, as the only person who has this level of control is the person that is choosing to use abuse and violence.

MCEDV and our member programs across the state have years of experience in working with

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.

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. In practice, Maine’s safe leave can be a false promise to victims as a result of the lack of clarity for employers and boundaries around how broadly they can define undue hardship and reasonable notice. Without clarity in the rules that accessing safe leave should be presumed to be in response to emergency or sudden necessity, employers will 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.

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. We urge the Committee to ensure that the paid safe leave provided for in Maine’s Paid Family and Medical Leave statute is not subject to these deficiencies, as all Mainers deserve the opportunity to utilize these protections in times of crisis. Without sufficient clarity and guardrails in the program rules, many employers will continue to put their needs ahead of the needs and safety of their employees.

MCEDV supports LD 575 and urges the Committee to remove the requirement that leave must be scheduled, as lives literally depend on it. Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for LD 575. 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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