

April 23, 2025

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, Representative Macias and other members of the Labor Committee, My name is Brian Banton and I work in my hometown of Brunswick as an English teacher at Brunswick High School. I live in Topsham where my two children attend school. I am here today to testify in opposition to LD 1400. Thank you for allowing testimony via ZOOM as it allows working parents like myself to have a voice in our Legislature.

I want to talk about my experience as a parent and a teacher. When my first child was born I was very lucky to be able take time off to be with him and my wife. It was a unique circumstance that allowed me to do so. While Sebastian was born healthy, we quickly discovered how difficult parenting can be. Sebastian had great difficulty feeding and wasn't gaining weight. We had to feed him via syringe every four hours. I do not know how we would have managed if I had had to go back to work. I found myself thinking a lot about the other new dads I had met in childbirth class. Guys like the construction manager who shared that he was planning to take one day off when his child was born. One day off for the birth of a first child is not something that we should accept as a society. Thankfully we all survived Sebastian's ordeal and today he is a thriving nine year old child.

When my second child, Nicolas, was born I was able to use my sick days to take time off to care for him and his mom, my wife. After approximately ten years, I had accumulated those days. My colleague down the hall had a child at the same time, but had only been working as an educator for a few years. He wasn't able to take much time off, because they did not have sufficient sick days to draw on. That never sat right with me. The support that we provide to parents should not be contingent upon how many years they've been teaching or what district they happen to work in.

The Paid Leave Law passed in the last Legislature is not perfect. We should work to strengthen it, not dismantle it. As it stands, the law provides a floor for employers to build on. It provides all workers, teachers and others, the basic ability to take time off regardless of their zip code, the property valuation of their town, or the strength of their contract.

It is not hyperbole to say that our children are our future. They are. Ensuring that all parents have the ability to spend a minimum of twelve weeks with their newborn is a smart and humane investment in our collective future. Please reject LD 1400 and all attempts to pick away at paid family leave. Thank you.