

Mary Audia
Scarborough
LD 1712

Dear Honorable Members Labor Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Mary Audia Mulholland, and I am a resident of Scarborough. I am also a mother to a 1-year-old daughter. I am here today in opposition of the bills before the committee today.

Maine has one of the oldest average ages in the country; however, at the same time, it's seeing a large influx of young people and young families moving here from other states, including my family in 2020. In 2024, Maine ranked #13 out of all 50 states for one-way moves to our state. If we want these young individuals and families to stay in Maine permanently, we need to provide the infrastructure to support them and their futures, and this includes PFML.

Paid Family Medical Leave is an essential component of a strong infrastructure, and 70% of Mainers strongly support it. Having a state-wide Paid Family Medical Leave policy will help keep smaller businesses more competitive, retain employees, and reduce hiring costs due to turnover. It's important to remember that this bill is not just for parental leave -- it's for many other reasons, including recovering from a major illness or surgery, or to take care of an ill family member. For employers and small business owners, this would be a game-changer to not risk losing some of your best performers due to lack of paid family medical leave. When I was job searching a few years ago, I did not even entertain job offers or interviews for an employer that did not provide PFML. It simply wasn't in the cards for my family. For employers, imagine what your workforce would look like if you had employees who were there because they truly want to be there, and not losing them to larger employers who offer better leave policies? PFML strengthens our workforce and our economy.

I gave birth in 2023, and I had multiple complications during pregnancy, birth, and postpartum, including several that threatened my life. My recovery was extremely challenging. I am grateful that I work for a large company and was able to take the time I needed to recover before returning to work -- something that I physically and mentally would truly not have been able to do had I not had a partially-paid parental leave and short-term disability policy through my employer. However, at the same time, being a new mother with no local family to help and only a percentage of pay (per my employer's policy) was extremely challenging. Due to my medical issues postpartum, I needed to go to the doctor frequently (1-2x per week for 6 months!) and needed to hire help due to lack of local family once my husband had to return to work, on top of the regular high costs of having a baby (diapers, clothes, bottles, etc.). I am deeply disappointed that there are individuals and corporations who still do not see the value in providing PFML. You cannot be pro-family and pro-business and not support PFML. For birthing parents, being supported during the most vulnerable time in your life is essential, so that you can return to your job fully recovered, healed, and ready to work. Employees cannot show up to work as their best selves and their best performance if they are not fully healed or recovered from birth.

Personally and candidly, I don't think 12 weeks is nearly enough time. On average, it takes a woman 18 months to 2 years to *fully* recover from birth. It's not enough, but it's a start, and we need to give it a chance. This program for Maine was carefully developed, and we need to let it do its job before making changes. Please help ensure that Maine becomes a more pro-family state.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on these bills. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Mary Audia Mulholland