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Maine State Legislature
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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
LABOR**

– IN SUPPORT –

**LD 1400 (HP 922) AN ACT TO EXEMPT CERTAIN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS
AND THEIR EMPLOYEES FROM THE PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE
BENEFITS PROGRAM**

April 23, 2025

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Madam Chairwoman, and honorable colleagues.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of this bill, which addresses a narrow but meaningful issue of fairness in relation to Maine's public schools.

Let me begin by saying that I strongly support the fundamental aspirations of the Paid Family and Medical Leave program. The ability for individuals to care for a newborn, recover from a serious illness, or be present for a family member in need is not only a matter of compassion—it is also a matter of dignity, health, and family stability.

At the same time, we should also recognize that many public school districts have long shared these values and have been ahead of the curve in offering generous, contractually guaranteed leave benefits. These locally negotiated agreements often provide 12 weeks or more of paid family and medical leave—benefits that are comparable, and in some cases even more robust, than those provided under the state's PFML program.

The legislation before you today does not seek to weaken or upend the Paid Family and Medical Leave program. Rather, it seeks to uphold the spirit of the program while addressing an unintended inequity that has arisen. School districts that are already meeting or exceeding the state's standard should not be required to pay into the PFML fund in addition to covering the cost of their own programs. That amounts to double payment—twice for the same benefit—and it diverts critical resources from the classroom.

This bill ensures that only those districts providing substantially equivalent benefits—through a collective bargaining or other binding agreement—would qualify for an exemption. It also includes reasonable accountability measures, requiring that those benefits be maintained over time. And it directs the Department of Labor to refund contributions made before the exemption took effect and to return any employee-paid premiums, ensuring fairness for both employers and workers.

Public schools play a foundational role in our communities. They already operate under tight budgets and are deeply committed to caring for their staff. This bill recognizes their long-standing efforts to provide meaningful leave benefits—and it does so without undermining the PFML program as a whole.

This is a measured, responsible approach that balances statewide standards with local realities. I respectfully urge the committee to support this legislation.

Thank you.

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