

April 22, 2025

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and other members of the Labor Committee,

My name is Tamber Craig. I work at Medway Middle School as the Grade 7 and 8 math teacher, and I live in Millinocket. I am writing this testimony in opposition to LD 1400.

I grew up as a Navy brat. As anyone who has grown up in a military family can testify, it is not just the parent who serves their country - the whole family does. The whole family sacrifices for the betterment of our nation. While I will not compare teaching to the military service, I will say the sacrifices of the family are still just as much a casualty of the teaching life.

Unlike most other jobs people work, teaching is not an occupation that gets left at the desk when we exit the school building. We bring it home with us. And it's not just papers we bring home, either. We bring the stress of a long day, a thousand different worries constantly racing through our minds. We bring administrative politics and lesson planning and prep. We bring concerns for IEPs and 504s and differentiation, and wondering how we're going to accommodate all of these things in a classroom of 25 students with no help. In the cases of far too many teachers and ed techs in schools today, we bring home bruises and bite marks and the weight of wondering if we can go back one more day. With all of these things, it's our families who catch us. It's our families who are there for us, who are listening as we cry and vent, who are helping to cut out a hundred Easter eggs for our little ones to color. It's our families who convince us to keep going when we want to give up. Teaching is a whole-family commitment, and many of us are still teaching today because of the support we've received from our loved ones at home.

For all our families that are there for us, the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program allows us to be there for them when they need us the most. It allows us to be able to fully focus on their needs without worrying if we are going to be able to pay the rent or put food on the table. Many times, there is no choice. We are the only ones who can do it. To possibly have to make the choice between being there when our family needs us the most or to have to keep teaching while our family suffers so we can keep a roof over our heads is a cruel blow to a profession that builds the foundation of this nation yet already receives so little respect in spite of it.

The teachers of the state you serve already make so many sacrifices to ensure the future of Maine will be in good, strong, educated hands. We do this not for the honor and glory, for there surely isn't much to be found in the current day and age, but because we believe the future is in our hands, and we want it to help it be the best one possible. To possibly remove us from a program that gives us the ability to be there for the family that is always there for us without fear of losing our financial security is unconscionable. I am asking that you please oppose this bill and allow us to continue to serve our communities and our families with the assurance that we are able to be there for all who will need us, in the present and in the future. Thank you.