

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and honorable members of the Labor Committee, my name is Shaun Donnelly and I live in the town of Arundel. I am testifying in writing in support of LD 575, and also to strongly urge this committee to oppose any measures to restrict the implementation of Maine's Paid Family Leave law.

I have been self-employed for the past 15 years, and I know firsthand the challenges that come with needing time off for personal or family health issues, and the strain it puts on our business and finances. When you run your own business, time away from work costs you double, not just in time that you're not getting paid, but also the time not spent lining up more work to keep the business going. This often means that there are times when I simply cannot afford to step away, and am forced to ignore my own needs and those of my closest loved ones.

When I was 20 years old, I was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis, a chronic health condition that is further aggravated by excessive stress. Imagine the difficulty of being self-employed and paying for your own health insurance, knowing that any time you step away from work risks not being able to pay your bills. Not having the capacity to take care of yourself, nevermind the people you love the most, is probably the worst kind of stress I've ever felt.

Requiring workers to schedule in advance their use of their earned PFML benefits would seriously undercut the effectiveness of this program. Living with a chronic illness, my disease can flare up at any time, and when that occurs I need to seek medical attention immediately. The same goes for anyone caring for a loved one who experiences a sudden medical emergency.

In addition, the numerous bills before this committee that would change how benefits are supported financially are dangerous to the future success of this program. The law as passed was carefully crafted after years of work and based on the testimony of hundreds of Mainers. It has undergone a year of rule making, where the DOL listened closely to the needs of individuals and businesses alike. Now is the time for the rubber to hit the road so we can measure its effectiveness and make informed adjustments to it once that data is in.

In conclusion, I urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 575. I also strongly urge you to vote "ought not to pass" on LDs 406, 539, 952, 1169, 1221, 1249, 1273, 1307, 1333, 1400, and 1712. In these uncertain times, Mainers need an effective and accessible PFML program more than ever. Thank you for your attention and your continued service to our great state.

Shaun Donnelly,  
Arundel