

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and honorable members of the Labor Committee: I am Sara Goodrich, a resident of Auburn, and I offer this testimony in opposition to all efforts to eliminate or roll back the benefits of the paid family and medical leave program.

My husband and I are both self-employed, both owning our own businesses. Currently, if we have to take any time off for any reason, we don't make money.

I would have really appreciated having something like PFML when I was taking my maternity leave. Before even considering getting pregnant, I looked into short-term disability policies, and I discovered they were not a viable option for me. Our children were born in 2018 and 2023, and both times, we saved in advance in order to take parental leave. Adding to the challenge: because I do physical work as a massage therapist, I had to reduce my hours during pregnancy, especially in the third trimester.

My husband is self-employed as a carpenter, and his work carries a higher risk of injury. He has been careful and fortunate so far, but the possibility of enforced time off is always there. Again, injury or illness could happen to either of us, and if we don't work, we don't get paid.

Like many Mainers my age, I also belong to the sandwich generation. My dad is 87, and he lives in Delaware. It's certainly possible that I would need to take time to care for him. Having this policy in place would be very helpful.

I fully support the provision in the current law that allows lower-income earners to claim a higher percentage of their income in benefits. Isn't it obvious that if you only make \$3,000 a month, suddenly making \$2,000 instead is a big deal? There is a basic minimum cost of life. The less money you make, the less margin you have.

Some of the costs my family incurs whether we are able to work or not: Rent of my office, groceries, utilities, mortgage, childcare. Maintaining childcare is crucial. If someone is sick, or caring for a new baby, they should be able to focus on the new child or on healing. They could lose their childcare place if they interrupt enrollment because their income has been disrupted, making it harder to go back to work when they're ready.

Contributing 0.5 percent of my income will come to, at maximum, \$25/month. For the peace of mind, it's worth it. People have a lot of profound worries about how they are going to live their lives and make ends meet, and for good reason. If having PFML in place lets us take some of these worries off people's minds it will be helpful for all of us. We would have a kinder world if people were less worried about their material existence.

I urge you to stand firm in support of Maine's paid family and medical leave program.