

Christine Renaud

Regarding: Labor Committee – LD 539 - An Act to Repeal the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program

April 2025

To the Members of the Labor Committee,

My name is Christine Renaud, and I am a Maine resident, mother, and social worker. I am testifying regarding lawmakers' efforts to repeal the newly initiated Paid Family and Medical Leave Act and to express my concerns for myself and for the citizens of Maine should this repeal succeed.

In November of 2022, I gave birth to my daughter a few weeks ahead of her due date, and, unexpectedly, discovered after her birth that she was also experiencing medical complications. Due to this, she and I spent the first weeks of her life in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). These events were costly to our family both emotionally and financially. While I was lucky to have an employer that allowed me to take time away from my work to be with my daughter, this time was not compensated and was also a costly investment in the form of significant medical bills.

The Paid Family and Medical Leave Act that was brought forth last year would have given our family considerable peace of mind, as well as a financial safety net, during what was already a challenging and overwhelming period in our lives. As a social worker, I work with new mothers, many of whom must return to work sooner, who are also not compensated for this time, and who, in the case of other NICU parents, are unable to remain at the hospital with their infants. Maintaining the Paid Family and Medical Leave Act allows parents to be present for their children in the first weeks of their lives and, in the hardest of scenarios, allows parents to provide care and comfort to their sick infants when they need it most.

While the early weeks of parenthood and supporting parents during this time is undoubtedly important, I also must recognize the many other groups who benefit from Paid Family and Medical Leave. As the wife of a Marine Corps Veteran who also supported a spouse through active duty, I must recognize the importance of Paid Leave around deployments and to support military, veterans, and their families during significant trials and transitions. Similarly, as are many of my peers, I am a mother to a young child and the daughter of aging parents. Paid Family and Medical Leave will also allow us the ability to support and provide care for our parents or family members when the time comes, without the fear of lost employment or sacrificed income.

While the Paid Family and Medical Leave Act comes with a cost to both employers and residents of Maine, this cost is miniscule in the face of the far greater cost of lost employees and lost financial security in times of hardship. I urge you to prioritize and protect the people of Maine at every stage of life.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. Your consideration of these matters is very much appreciated.