

Sarah Shepro
Portland
LD 1712

To the honorable members of the Labor Committee,

While I appreciate efforts to support both small businesses and workers - there are some glaring issues with this proposed legislation that lead me to ask the the committee vote 'ought not to pass' on LD 1712.

First, prohibiting the review of an employer's claim of undue hardship will undoubtedly be very harmful to workers, especially if employers have complete freedom to determine other criteria that constitute an undue hardship. I appreciate the clarification that this "subsection may not be construed to prevent an employer from granting leave despite a determination of undue hardship by the employer," however, closing the door for review opens the door for unmitigated abuse of the undue hardship clause.

Second, reducing the benefit for employees at all levels of earnings is unfair - it will disproportionately affect lower income workers and discourage them from taking the amount of leave they need or any leave at all, which is the entire purpose of this program. Imagine you're a low-income worker, maybe earning \$30K a year, and you are thinking about taking leave to take care of your newborn child. You need money to support your family and you know that spending these precious moments with your baby is essential to their development. You're probably a renter, so the benefit you receive likely barely covers rent in many cities in Maine, let alone childcare. You're unlikely to have sufficient savings to compensate for the lowered earnings. Why punish workers who earn lower wages? We should favor a progressive benefit amount that pays a higher benefit to lower wage workers and a lower benefit to higher wage workers.

Please consider why this program is being implemented when reviewing this proposed legislation. Remember that this program also has short and long term benefits for employers.

Thank you for your time.