

Testimony of Greg and Lauren Soutiea – Co-owners of the Craignair Inn by the Sea LLC and Causeway Restaurant in St. George Maine.

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Sen. Tipping, Rep. Roeder, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, my name is Greg Soutiea and together with my wife Lauren Soutiea, we have owned the Craignair Inn by the Sea and Causeway Restaurant in St. George for over 6 years now. We have grown the seasonal restaurant from 7 employees to now over 50 in peak season and a year-round restaurant giving us the opportunity to support 20+ of our staff with year-round jobs.

We always do our best to support our team, even at a detriment to ourselves at times. Including this past weekend when our primary bar manager of nearly 3 years had a personal emergency and on Friday afternoon needed to take the weekend off so I stepped in on one of the busiest weekends we have seen so far this year and one the busiest restaurant days of the year (Easter Sunday) putting in over 40 hours bartending myself so that she could have that time to take care of her personal matter. Doing so, though, impacted our service levels and our guest experience negatively as I couldn't maintain my normal "support" role on the floor of the restaurant during the busy days.

We understand the need for Maine to have a paid family leave program to support its workforce, however we see many challenges to the one currently signed into law.

As such, we wish to advocate in **support of LD 1249** "An Act to Delay Payment of Benefits Under the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program", in **support of LD 1333** "An Act to Make Changes to the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program", and in **support of LD 1712** "An Act to Amend the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program to Balance Support of Businesses and Employees" while testifying adamantly in **opposition of LD 575** "An Act to Ensure Equitable Access to the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program by Removing the Requirement That Leave Must Be Scheduled to Prevent Undue Hardship on the Employer".

We feel that the Undue Hardship clause of the existing law is the only thing protecting small businesses in Maine currently, especially those who rely primarily on seasonal visitors/business. While we are open year-round, we see 70-75% of our total income annually in the 5 months between June and October.

In addition to outlining a clearer definition of Undue Hardship, which we believe is essential to keeping this provision/program workable for small businesses LD 1712 also works to simplify benefits administration and offers a more reasonable filing deadline to help us plan and fill positions effectively. Most importantly, the bipartisan support of LD 1712 has been great to see come out of the planning and future of this program and we hope this continues with this process and others into the future.

Testimony respectfully submitted on April 22, 2025.

Greg Soutiea
SPRUCE HEAD
LD 1249

Testimony in support of LD 1249 attached.