

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and other members of the Labor Committee,

My name is Lily Withington. My pronouns are she/her. I am a teacher at Deering High School in Portland. I live in Southern Maine. I am here today to testify in opposition to LD 1400, An Act to Exempt Certain Public School Districts and Their Employees from the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program.

It's been my dream to teach since high school. Yet, when I speak to my friends about finances, watch them get married, buy homes, and have children, I can't help but wonder if it was a financial mistake to pursue my dream job.

My partner and I have forgone a wedding in order to save up for a home. It could take us ten years to meet that goal, but it's ok. We're happy. I can continue to drive my old car. We can furnish our apartment with hand-me-downs. I don't need to travel for vacation. Owning a home can wait... because teaching is my calling.

I make sacrifices for the love of my career, but there are limits. I would love to start a family. I've been doing the parental leave calculations since I started my job. "At minimum it will take 4 years to bank 12 weeks of sick leave... If I was sick 3 days a year, it would take 5 years... At my current rate, it would take 6 years..." and so on. And I wonder, "If I wanted to start a family, could I really make parental leave in this profession?"

Frankly, with my current salary, and my current sick days, I would need to quit teaching if I wanted to start a family. If I were to go on parental leave right now, my sick days would only cover 6 weeks. I would not be able to pay my rent and utilities if I were to take the recommended 12 weeks of parental leave.

I was elated when I learned that Paid Family Medical Leave was passed in Maine: Paid Family Medical Leave would allow me to stay in my dream profession.

I would also like to note that Paid Family Medical Leave is not only transformative for us young would-be parents, but also for those of us who have sick and elderly family members.

My mother almost 70 years old and disabled, and has been hospitalized with TIAs (also called mini-strokes) twice in the past year. My father is in his early 70's. When I was in high school, he survived a golf-ball sized brain tumor and two bouts of spinal meningitis. I am keenly aware that my parents' health is not assured. My contract includes 15 days to care for a member of my immediate family. I hope I never need to take those 15 days. But in the case that one of my parents is gravely ill, I do not know how I will live with myself if I have to choose to pay my rent over caring for them.

Teachers put everything on the line for our jobs. We do not have the financial flexibility to take unpaid leave. And even the most dedicated teachers are considering leaving the profession to

make ends meet. Paid Family Medical Leave will be transformative for us, and I implore that you do not approve this bill. Thank you.